

TV'S FORERUNNERS OF  
'THE TWILIGHT ZONE'

# THE TWILIGHT ZONE MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER 1981/\$2

NEW JOURNEYS  
OF THE IMAGINATION  
...IN THE TRADITION  
OF THE CLASSIC  
TELEVISION SERIES

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW  
**RICHARD MATHESON**  
**RECALLS THE YEARS**  
**WITH ROD SERLING**  
PLUS  
**MATHESON IN THE MOVIES**  
FULL-COLOR RETROSPECTIVE

**SPECIAL TZ PREVIEW:**  
**JOHN SLADEK'S**  
**NEW COMIC MASTERPIECE,**  
**'RODERICK: THE EDUCATION**  
**OF A YOUNG MACHINE'**

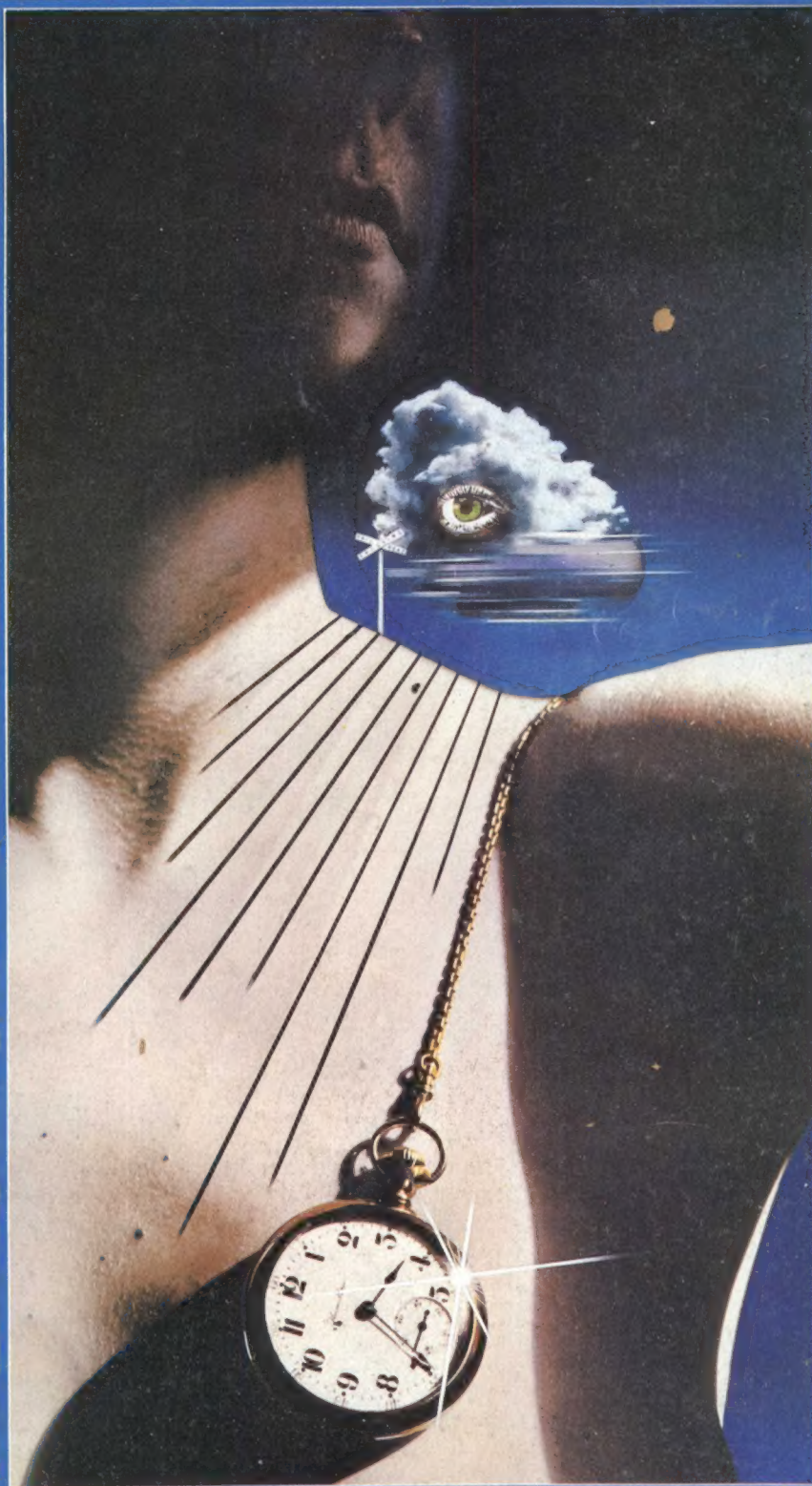
**CLASSIC ROD SERLING**  
**TWILIGHT ZONE SCRIPT**  
**'TIME ENOUGH AT LAST'**

**A NEW SUPERNATURAL TALE**  
**BY GARY BRANDNER**  
**AUTHOR OF 'THE HOWLING'**

STARTLING NEW FICTION:  
**DANGEROUS HITCHHIKERS,**  
**DIRTY-MINDED GHOSTS,**  
**DEMONS FROM THE PAST &**  
**DREAMS THAT COME TRUE**

**SHOW-BY-SHOW GUIDE**  
**TO TV'S TWILIGHT ZONE**

**DR. VAN HELSING:**  
**SHOULD HORROR FANS**  
**BELIEVE IN GHOSTS?**





# ROD SERLING'S THE TWILIGHT ZONE MAGAZINE

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Cover art by Ralph Mercer

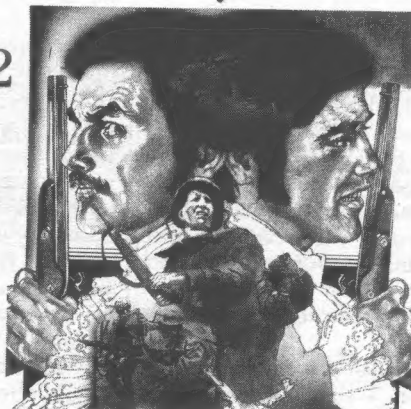
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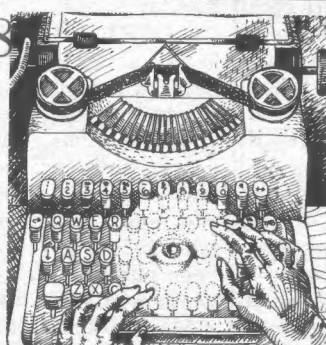
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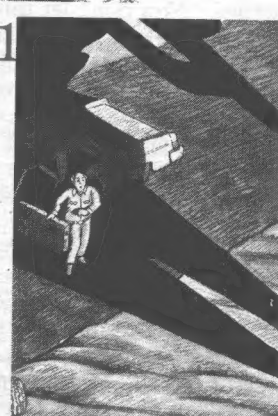
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# Rationalists and rogues . . .



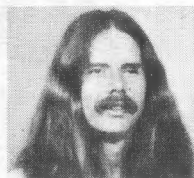
Sladek



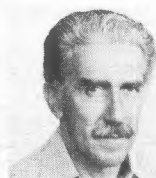
Godwin



Brandner



Hill



Wodhams



Asherman

"We live," said Mencken, "in a land of abounding quackeries," and he placed modern American education near the top of his list, dismissing it as "largely the confection of imbeciles," most of whom should be hanged. "School days," he noted, "are the unhappiest in the whole span of human existence. They are full of dull, unintelligible tasks, new and unpleasant ordinances, brutal violations of common sense and common decency. It doesn't take a reasonably bright boy long to discover that most of what is rammed into him is nonsense, and that no one really cares very much whether he learns it or not. His parents, unless they are infantile in mind, tend to be bored by his lessons and labors, and are unable to conceal the fact from his sharp eyes. His first teachers he views simply as disagreeable policemen. His later ones he usually sets down quite accurately as asses."

Mencken was writing in 1928, but the asses he catalogued have far from disappeared—as a certain fellow named Roderick discovers in the pages that follow. Roderick is the eponymous hero of **JOHN SLADEK's** forthcoming novel (subtitled *The Education of a Young Machine*); he's a plucky, precocious little robot who, Candide-like, is forever running into rogues, charlatans, and boobs, most of them bent on proving that he's merely a boy with a handicap.

Roderick himself is nothing if not rational. When a school psychologist soothes, "Now don't let this white coat make you nervous," Roderick wonders why, if the coat makes people nervous, the doctor continues to wear it. When a schoolmate shows him "some real dirty pitchers," Roderick wonders if they're dirty because the couples depicted appear to be wrestling on the ground. When, near the end of the novel, Roderick faces death at the hands of a lynch mob, he confides to a companion: "I was just wondering if my whole life would flash before me. I mean my *whole* life. Because if it did, there'd have to be a moment when I relived the present moment, wouldn't there? When I started reliving my

whole life again? And in that life I'd get to the same moment, and start reliving—"

"Just shut up," says his companion. So much for rationality.

For Roderick's fresh and irreverent insights we have Sladek to thank. Author of some wittily inventive science fiction (including Pocket Books' recent *Best of John Sladek* and, with Thomas Disch, the disturbing novel *Black Alice*), he's also written *The New Apocrypha*, a skeptical look at ESP, UFOs, astrology, and the like, and in which he makes short work of such cult figures as Cayce, Von Däniken, and Velikovsky. For the past decade he's made his home in England, where *Roderick* was one of this year's National Book Award nominees. Look for it to make an even bigger stir when it's published here.

**PARKE GODWIN** came to writing after a career in the military (infantry, coast artillery, intelligence) and a career on the stage; he draws upon the former in *Stroke of Mercy*, the powerful tale with which he makes his *Twilight Zone* debut. Godwin is the author of *Firelord*, an Arthurian novel from Doubleday, and co-author, with Marvin Kaye, of *The Masters of Solitude* and its recently completed sequel, *Wintermind*. He and Kaye first met several years ago during an off-Broadway production of *The Merchant of Venice* with Godwin in the Shylock role; they are now finishing an occult novel, *A Cold Blue Light*, for Berkley Books.

**GARY BRANDNER** is best known as author of *The Howling*, the novel which spawned the first—and surely the cleverest—of this year's werewolf films. In the past twelve years, however, he has turned out fourteen other novels, fifty short stories, and a couple of screenplays. His most recent novel, *Hellborn*, has just been published by Fawcett. Brandner works within the classic *Twilight Zone* mode in this issue's *The Loaner*, which, he assures us, was actually written on a loaned typewriter much like the one in the story.

**HAL HILL**—like Brandner, a

Californian—writes quirkily colorful fiction when not working as a groundskeeper at a state school for learning-disabled children. Here he offers a one-way trip to *Chameleon Junction*; its affectionate satire of Mencken's *Boobus americanus* makes it an endearing variation on a popular sf theme.

**CHRISTOPHER FAHY** is a native of Philadelphia, where the bizarre events of *Matinee at the Flame* are enacted, but he now lives on the rocky coast of Maine. Like Parke Godwin, he's had fiction in the pages of *Gallery* and other magazines. His first novel, *Night Flyer*, will be published next April by Jove.

Though he's blessed with a satanic imagination, the Down Under that **JACK WODHAMS** hails from is merely Queensland, Australia, where he's one of that country's most widely published sf writers—and probably its best-known representative in such American magazines as *Analog*, *Amazing*, and *Quest/Star*.

Perhaps in deference to *Roderick's* antipedagogical slant, this issue's two academics have preferred to remain faceless. **JOHN ALFRED TAYLOR** is a professor of English at Washington and Jefferson College in Pennsylvania. A skilled and subtle horror writer, he's also turned his hand to poetry and opera libretti, and is now working on a film adaptation of Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" (in part, he says, to see if it can actually be done). **KURT VAN HELSING**—who sometimes adds to his name a suspicious-looking string of initials, including Ph.D., D.D. Oxon., and D. Litt. Misk.—reports that he's currently teaching at "a small university in Lexington, Kentucky."

The nonacademic yet scholarly **ALLAN ASHERMAN**, author of the *Star Trek Compendium*, performs prodigious feats of archaeology in this issue's television survey. He appears able to remember shows from his earliest infancy, and others that were broadcast well before his birth—a talent that's found nowhere but the *Twilight Zone*.

—T.K.



# Books

by Theodore Sturgeon

*Fascinations—Collaterals, Provocateurs, and Collectibles:* The most provocative reading experience of all is Buckminster Fuller's **Critical Path** (St. Martin's, \$15.95), his fifteenth book, written in his eighty-fifth year, the chronicle of the achievements of one of the most remarkable men who has ever lived. If I say any more about it, I'll say nothing else in all my space. . . . **Star Trek Compendium**, by Allan Asherman (Simon & Schuster, \$8.95) is shelfmate to Bjo Trimble's brilliant *Star Trek Concordance*, and contains thumbnails of every single episode, together with casts, credits, and many anecdotes about the writing and production of each. Lots of pictures, excellent organization. . . . **Writing for The Twilight Zone** by George Clayton Johnson is highly recommended for two things: as beautiful a wraparound cover painting as you've ever seen (by Judy King-Rieniets) and the four *Twilight Zone* scripts, reproduced as they came from the author's typewriter; they're brilliant, especially "Nothing in the Dark." For the rest, the need for a copy editor is an embarrassment; buy it for points 1 and 2 above. . . . **A History of the Hugo, Nebula, and International Fantasy Awards**, by Donald Franson and Howard DeVore (Misfit Press, Dearborn, Michigan, \$5) is a really complete reference, containing not only listings of all the winners through all the years, but all the successive ballots as well. . . . **PulpSmith** (The Smith, 5 Beekman St., New York, \$2) is weird and wonderful, a book-magazine or magazine-book operating under the directive "Anything goes as long as it's good," ". . . melding fantasy/sf, unclassifiable fiction, Westerns, folk tales, experiments and . . . poetry." Looks like fun.

*Collections and Anthologies:* **Fireflood and Other Stories** (Timescape, \$2.75) is ample proof that Vonda N. McIntyre deserves the awards and trophies she's come by recently. Her clean narrative sense, her profound compassion, and the sense of real conviction shine out from this book. . . . **Fantasy Annual III** (Timescape, \$2.95) is the product of one



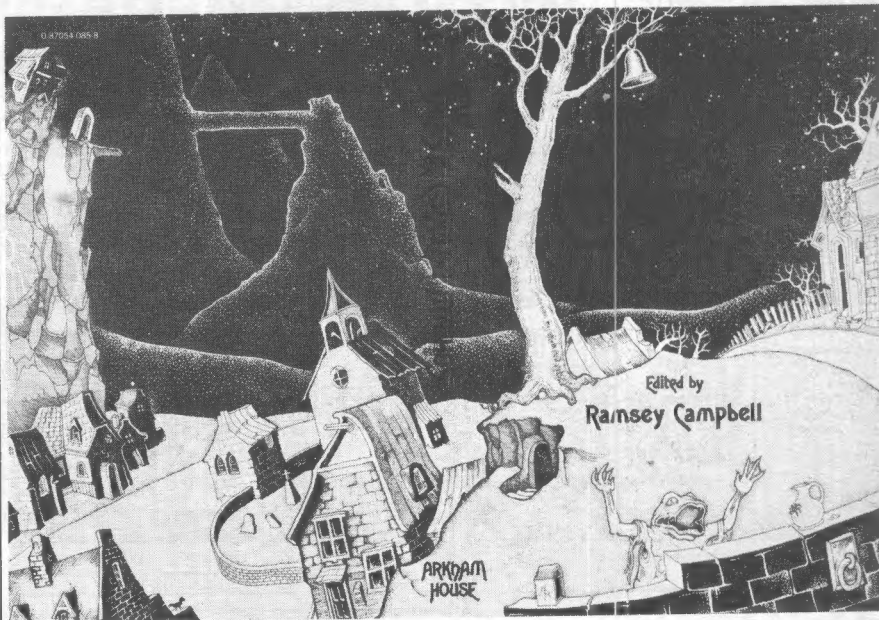
of the very best editors this field has yet seen—Terry Carr. He's combed not only the books and magazines within the field but outside as well—stories by Stephen King and Russell Kirk, for example, as well as a diadem of writers familiar to us. . . . **Binary Star # 5** (Dell, \$2.50) is a gratifying package, holding two short novels—George R. R. Martin's *Nightflyers* and Vernor Vinge's *True Names*—each commented on by the other author. The intro is by James Frenkel, series editor, and there are portrait photographs of the authors on the inside back cover. Quite a buy. By the way, the Vinge especially straddles sf and f in a delightfully *Twilight Zone* way. . . . A really interesting "theme" anthology is **They Came from Outer Space** (Doubleday, \$11.95), edited by Jim Wynorski, with an introduction by Ray Bradbury. Subtitled "12 classic science fiction tales that became major motion pictures," it's a study in what happens to fiction when it becomes film: always changed, often distorted, sometimes degraded, occasionally not, and once in a while improved. I'm especially glad to see Harry Stubbs's *Farewell to the Master*, from which *The Day The Earth Stood Still* was made; both magnificent narratives, which could run back-to-back as a double bill without cheating the audience. There's a perennial rumor that Hollywood has

a master plot to keep good sf writers out. Not so. A story is one guy with one typewriter. A film is and has to be a committee product; no one person could possibly do it all, and writing for the screen, with all of its considerations of scheduling and budget, is a highly specialized skill. Any top-flight sf author who has learned that skill would be welcomed in Tinseltown with open arms. Few have. There is no plot. . . . **New Tales of the Cthulhu Mythos** (Arkham House, \$11.95) is edited by horror veteran Ramsey Campbell, who has guided his writers admirably in their expressions of the tone and careful pacing of the Lovecraft idiom. Included is one by your editor, and it's not out of my attachment to this journal that I proclaim it one of the best in the book, and certainly the finest T.E.D. Klein I have yet read.

*Novels:* (Like everything else in this space, what follows here is In My Opinion.) Two considerations: 1. Writing is, at base, only two things—what is said, and how it is said. To have something to say and to say it badly is to be unheard. To have nothing to say and to say it beautifully is to be heard immediately and, as immediately, forgotten. 2. Irreverence is a tricky virtue—and a virtue only when used deftly as a humorous edge to the



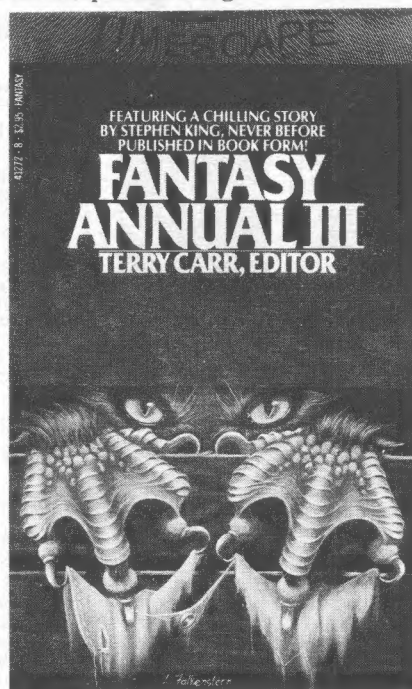
author's blade. It is difficult to define precisely, except by example. The novels of Philip K. Dick, like **Time Out of Joint** (it's most recent appearance being from Gregg Press at \$14.95) are, all of them, reverent. It is not always easy to understand what it is that Dick reveres, but you know it is unequivocally there. Robert Anton Wilson's books (most recently **Masks of the Illuminati** from Timescape at \$2.95) has his reverence trapped between his tongue and his cheek, but by the funny way he talks, you know it's there. **Golem<sup>100</sup>**, by Alfred Bester (Timescape, \$2.95) reveres nothing, and, for all its typographical didoes and intrusive illustrations, has nothing to say. I found the book both flashy and ugly, and I truly mourn the substance and fury of the two great Bester masterpieces, *The Demolished Man* and *The Stars My Destination*. . . . I am overwhelmed by Doris Vallejo's **Windsound** (Berkley, \$2.25). There is a depth and degree of tenderness in this remarkable novel, a depth and degree of sensitivity that I, all my life an ardent feminist, find most mysterious and most wonderful about women. . . . Welcome the third big volume of the Chronicles of Tarnor, **The Northern Girl** (Berkley, \$2.25) by Elizabeth A. Lynn. Lynn has created a world I have to believe in, and people I know and love; in this day of dragged-out trilogies, this very large one is, for me, too short. . . . I read with joy every word of Jack Williamson's **The Humanoid Touch** (Bantam, \$2.75). It happens that I was around when Williamson wrote a wonder-filled novelette for John Campbell called *With Folded Hands*. John loved it but couldn't bear the idea of all of humanity succumbing to the total care of servant robots, so beat on Williamson (not that it took much beating) to let him add three dots to the title, and write him a sequel called . . . *And Busy Minds*. Together, the two became that great classic, *The Humanoids*. And what has pleased me so very much is that in this new book, the author has continued the narrative just as if the intervening four decades never happened. If you want to sample the sense of wonder as it was when sf was ignited into the so-called Golden Age, you'll find it here. . . . I fell into #4 of a series about The Empire Princess, called *The Beasts of Hades*, by Graham Diamond, and Oh Lord! noble wolves and a brave rabbit



and a cowardly hyena, talking animals all; and then a sword-swinging forest girl who never lost a fight; gargoyles on unicorns, giant evil moles and a stray Neanderthal. I was about to ignore it with a terse sophisticated remark or two when something made me say, Hey whoa. I flashed on a thirteen-year-old me, goggle-eyed in a corner of the Philadelphia Public Library, slurping up dozens of books like this, and building up the passion we all share today. It is easy to forget that a lifelong involvement with fantasy and science fiction, magic and adventure, can begin with books like this; it is easy to let one's sophistication get the better of

one's understanding. So: more power to the Empire Princess and her ilk.

In just the same area, let us celebrate the belated appearance here of Alan Garner's **Elidor** (Del Rey, \$1.95), a book that earned a good deal of affection in England when it was published in 1965. It's a tumble-ahead, marvel-upon-marvel narrative firmly locked in the contemporary scene, about an English family with four children who run head-on into the forces of an alternate universe — yet another TZ sort of blend of sf and magic. The charm of the novel (aside from some almost impenetrable English slang) lies in the characterizations of these wonderful kids, and their interactions with each other, from heroic cooperation to sibling hatred. Garner is basically a deeply serious writer, steeped in myth and legend, which emerges in all his writing much the way *Elidor*, that other universe, emerges into London. Find some youngster who has just discovered C.S. Lewis and give him/her this one; you'll be rewarded. . . . At this point I have been pondering for an hour whether to share with you the thickening stream of Stephen King imitations coming to me from the publishers: woman repeatedly raped by demon, woman savaged by maniac plagued by voices from elsewhere, woman fleeing from entity who (and because) he causes her ecstasies. I'm not going to do it. I feel it's sick and I know it's popular and I hope it's transient. On that unhappy note: *Hasta la vista*, which means "Hurry up and get rid of your credit cards." 17



# Screen

by Gahan Wilson

## **Excalibur** (Orion)

Directed by John Boorman  
Screenplay by John Boorman  
and Rospo Pallenberg

## **The Hand** (Orion)

Written and directed  
by Oliver Stone

By any logical calculation I should be nuts about the films of John Boorman. Were I to take an intelligently constructed multiple-choice test ("Check one"), an impartial observer would be certain to conclude—once he had run the results through the old computer—that I would be a devoted fan and staunch supporter of the man's films. We share so many things in common, John Boorman and myself, that it is a continuing wonder to me why our relationship has been so persistently disastrous. Why do I groan at irregular intervals while watching his movies? Why do I invariably leave gritting my teeth and wearing an expression which brings dismay to the people waiting in line who have paid for their tickets and were hoping to enjoy themselves for the next hour or so?

Take Jung, good old Carl Gustav Jung, the shrink *par excellence*. I humbly consider Jung to be one of the wisest and most helpful souls to have walked the earth; indeed, I am so fond of the fellow that I sometimes wonder if I am not doing an archetypal Wise Old Man projection number on him. Boorman, very obviously, shares my profound respect for the gentleman, and in his films the Jungian images jostle and crowd one another to the point of absolute rudeness. Sometimes it works—a little moment in *Zardoz*, a fleeting incident or two in *Exorcist II*—but its main effect is to leave me momentarily convinced that, if this is what happens when one's work is inspired by the good doctor, perhaps he was not such a Wise Old Man after all.

King Arthur is another fellow I've

long admired. What with Merlin and all that magic, the brave knights and the beautiful ladies, the wonders and strange dangers within and without Camelot, and, of course, the Holy Grail (let's hear it for the Holy Grail!), I've always considered him quite a guy.

Well, so, apparently, has Boorman; once again we're tacking along the same lines. He has reverently fashioned a film about Arthur and the Round Table and he has called it *Excalibur*, after the marvelous weapon which will slice through armor plate like a razor through a bar of Kraft Cracker Barrel Cheese if you're doing good-guy stuff with it, but which will shatter like a dime-store *Star Wars* light saber if you stab at somebody with it in an unsportsmanlike fashion; and the movie has at last provided what may be the essential clue to what has been wrong between me and John Boorman all along. The problem is

that he exercises a great talent, a marvelous imagination, and an enormous technical ability, all together in a concentrated and continuously successful effort, on many different levels, to miss the point!

It's really a great relief for me to have had this insight—it's like taking off tight shoes after a long walk—and it explains so many puzzlements and nagging irritations. I think the reason *Excalibur* blew the whistle on it for me was because, unlike the previous films, which were free-wheeling, personal visions without any form at all other than that which Boorman felt inclined to give them, this movie's based on a completely familiar classic whose plot, points, and aims have been mulled over not just by little old me, but—if we might get Jungian again, and why not?—by my Collective Unconscious. Hell, I've been brooding over what happened to Arthur since I cooked wild



"... personal problems they're having trouble ironing out." Passions smolder round the table in *Excalibur* among Arthur (Nigel Terry), Guenevere (Cherie Lunghi), and Lancelot (Nicholas Clay).

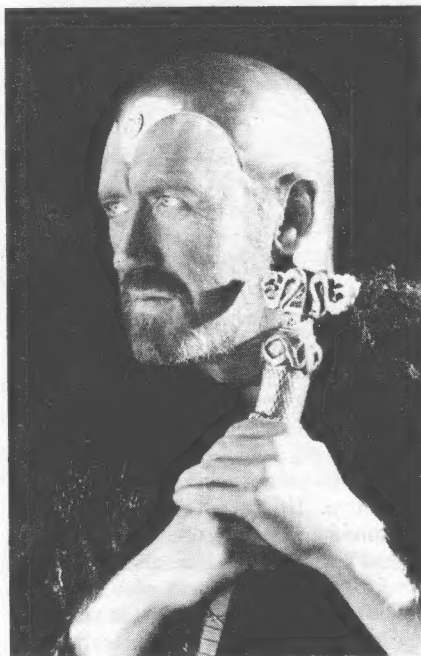


boar stew over a peat fire and ate it smoking in my bare hands back in the Dark Ages. Me and all those other Celts milling around in my brain and bloodstream have been chewing over Mordred, Guenevere, and Lancelot, and what they all meant, for as long as I can remember and long, long before; and anybody who dares try and tell me the old, sad story had damned well better get it right. *Excalibur* does not. Continually, doggedly, and in remarkably diverse ways, it persists in missing the point.

Take one of the truly great moments of the saga, one of its absolute peaks: Arthur's pulling of the sword from the stone. The scene is thrown away! There is a mill and a confusion. Arthur, played loutishly by Nigel Terry, grabs the sword out almost absentmindedly while he, — and the audience — looks after a running man. Then there is a blurred and slightly cranky discussion as to did he or didn't he do the miracle — a discussion which, perversely, continues to sap away the drama; and so on, and so on. I want to be thrilled by a troubadour's song, but it's as if the whole miraculous incident has been told you by the town bore. You find yourself getting glazy-eyed, sneaking glimpses at your watch. Who cares about all these yokels, anyway? Why doesn't he shut up?

And the core, the chief wonder of the legend: *Camelot*, for Christ's sake! What does Boorman do with Camelot? There's a far shot of it, glinting, which is nice, but you get close up and it's only a garden-variety Dark Ages castle with things roasting on spits and lots of costumed extras. There's no real sense of pageantry about it, and from the quick cuts and dim lighting you sort of get the feeling that they're trying to cover up cheap sets — which may or may not have been the case; it was too dark to tell. And the Round Table, instead of being presented as a shining beauty at which we might gaze in rapt wonder for at least a couple of minutes, is glimpsed dimly over the shoulders of a bumpkin who is shouted away before he, or we, can even start to take it in. My Collective Unconscious didn't like that at all.

Merlin, as played by Nicol Williamson in a tin hat, is good, but mostly because of Nicol Williamson. His speeches are distressingly soporific, and though his technique



"... at least a suggestion of the super-human." Nicol Williamson, hawk-eyed and helmeted, plays a Merlin who works relatively few miracles.

in delivering them is clever, we all know we're not listening to a being only slightly human and unfixed in time and space, but only to a good actor doing what he can with inferior material. He does have one great line, though, a magical formula in some broguish tongue, and for a moment we are listening to Merlin. But only for a moment.

Actually, the only chunks of the movie Boorman really succeeds with are the spooky bits and characters. Morgana, Arthur's half-sister and a mistress of sibling rivalry, is good in flashes, and there is a very effective scene wherein Mordred, born of witchcraft between Arthur and Morgana, rides tittering in a cupid suit of glittering golden armor past a tree festooned with rotting knights. Then, just when you're starting to smile a little and mutter "Hey, man, that's getting *mythic!*", Boorman has a crow pluck an unconvincing eyeball from one of the knight's unconvincing skulls. You begin to wonder how come the crow ate all the rest off and left that juicy bit for last, and the first thing you know your feet are right back on the ground.

The worst point-missing of all is Boorman's presentation of King Arthur and his knights as "just folks." There is, about Merlin, at least a

suggestion of the superhuman, but not with Arthur. He starts out as a bumpkin, and though he grows a beard as the movie rolls along and acquires a little polish, he's just like some guy who was good at athletics and graduated with you in high school — no more impressive than that. And the same for all the other members of the Round Table. At their very peak, as presented in *Excalibur*, they remind you of a team of commandos in a movie about World War II — a gutsy bunch of soldiers, but with personal problems they're having trouble ironing out. (Especially that Sir Lancelot.) If that's all there'd been to Camelot, we'd never have heard of it.

*The Hand*, now, is a thoroughly different piece of work: quite unpretentious, cannily aware of what it's trying to do, and — not as common as one would like in the horror-film genre — full of completely believable characters reacting convincingly and humanly to the dreadful events thrust upon them.

I must admit that it took a bit of getting together for me to see this item, since it concerns a cartoonist who is unfortunate enough to have his drawing hand chopped off in an accident. Being a cartoonist myself, the theme — no pun intended — cuts pretty close to the bone. However, I am also a movie reviewer, and so I put on a brave little smile, did my duty, and am at present seriously considering enlarging my insurance policy.

Oliver Stone, who wrote and directed *The Hand*, has balanced his film very neatly between fantasy and grim truth, and has used this very ambiguity to heighten his effects. Is Michael Caine — every inch the repressed and slightly twitchy cartoonist — *really* being haunted by his dismembered hand, or is he simply nutty as a fruitcake? It's a clever ploy, since it forces the audience to ask itself the very same question that plagues Caine, and thus gets them in the same jumpy frame of mind. *Do I really remember seeing my hand scuttle across the studio floor?* asks Caine. *Does he?* asks the audience.

The film pays great attention to reality, which of course makes the impossible horror seem even more horrible. We have great detail of what the amputee must face. We see the shock of the bloody accident itself; we

see Caine getting to be pals with the artificial claw and, later, showing his little daughter the stump as gently as possible.

Running parallel with this agonizing examination of what you and I would face, were we unlucky enough to suffer such a disaster, is the development of Caine's growing suspicion that the hand—which is not merely missing from his arm, but actually *missing*—might still be in very jaunty condition. He searches the tall grass in a field near the scene of the accident, and, in a quick shot, we see his mental image of the thing moldering under crawling beetles; then the grass moves along behind him as if something low were crawling there, with Caine altogether unaware. But is it actually happening, or is it another image? Who's crazy—Caine for believing it, or the audience for believing it?

As a nice touch, just to increase the misery, Caine must put up with one of the best bitch-wives I've seen up there on the screen in some time. She's played by Andrea Marcovicci, and she's either one hell of an actress or—and I sincerely hope for her friends and associates that it's not so—she's a case of brilliant casting. Marvelously unreliable in every way, infuriatingly devious, she is absolutely what you *do not need* if you get your hand lopped off. Throughout the movie she has a perfectly wonderful way of staring past her suffering, pleading husband into a future which will be, hopefully, brighter without him; and if Ms. Marcovicci has a heart in real life, or indeed any small trace of common humanity, she has my sincerest congratulations on concealing any trace of it so completely in this role.

There are a number of other well-realized characters in *The Hand*, and when they come to a bad end you are sorry for all but one of them. Annie McEnroe is convincing as a rather dim but friendly little student of Caine's, and her notebook is crammed with hilariously bad drawings; Bruce McGill is good as a dropout psychology instructor, and Viveca Lindfors does a really dandy number as a psychiatrist whom *The Hand* simply loathes—and you will too.

That reminds me: there's another nice thing about this film. It ends happily.

You'll see what I mean. **17**



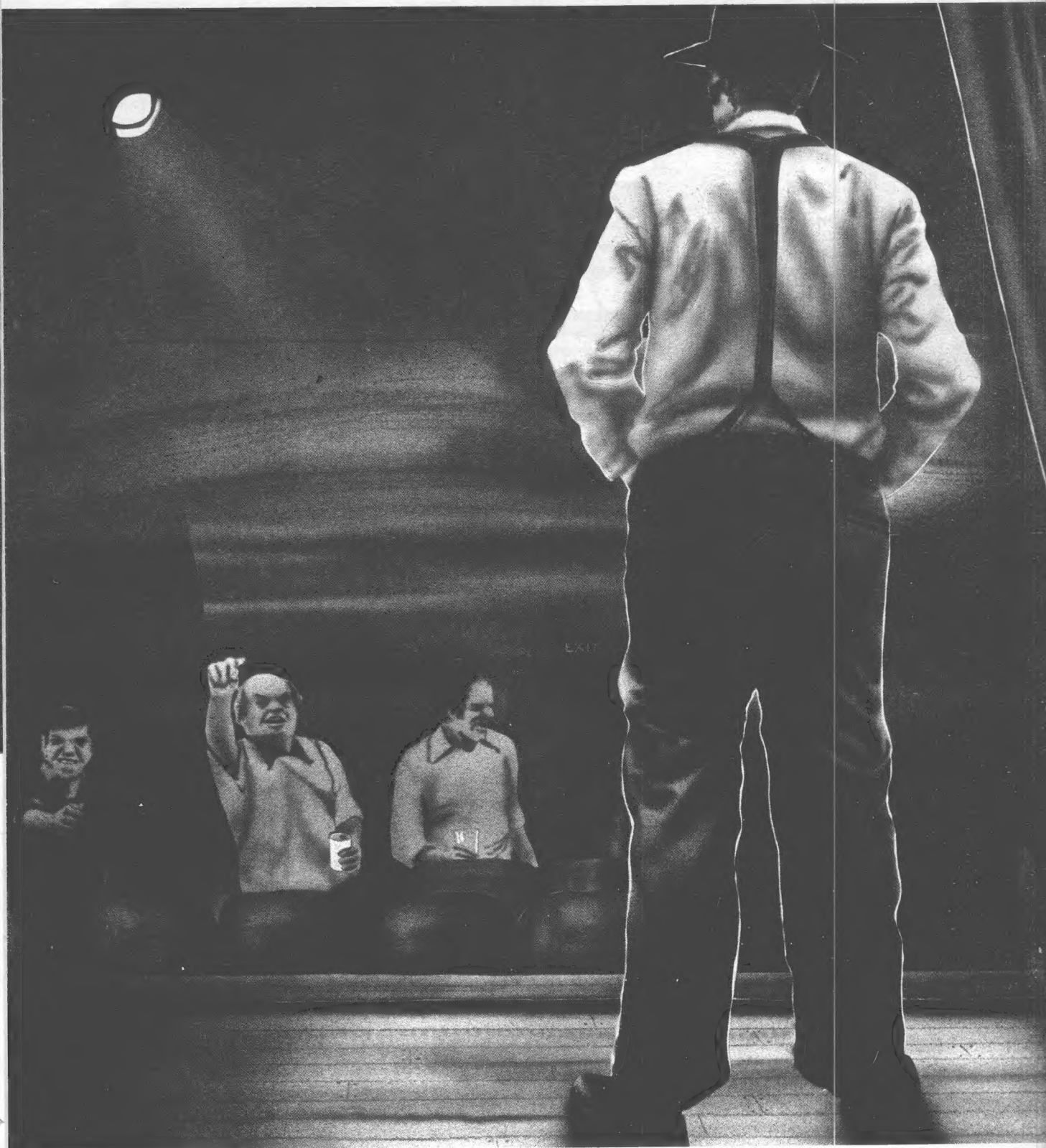
"Every inch the repressed and slightly twitchy cartoonist." During pre-accident days in *The Hand*, Jon Lansdale (Michael Caine) works on an episode of his Conan-like comic strip.



"One of the best bitch-wives I've seen in some time." With the loss of his hand and his livelihood, Lansdale and his wife Anne (Andrea Marcovicci) are frequently at each other's throat.



# MATINEE AT



# THE FLAME

BY  
CHRISTOPHER FAHY

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE, HE KNEW—  
BUT WAS HIS LIFE JUST A SERIES OF GAGS?

**E**lmer Hutchins sat in his truck and stared through the mist at the brown brick wall. Four fifty-one Blake, that's what the guy had said, rear entrance, he knew he'd heard him right. He looked at the scrap of paper again, then back at the battered green metal door on the other side of the alley. Four fifty-one *Rear*, it said in white paint; yeah, this had to be it. He looked at the rusted fire escape, the cinderblocked windows, the line of pigeons along the roof, the water dripping grayly onto dark cobblestones. Four fifty-one Blake Street—the old Flame Burlesk.

Elmer opened the door of his truck. It slipped a notch, then groaned. He stepped into the drizzle-slick alley, a sad-faced hound of a man of sixty-five, bent, tired, a crushed Stetson hat with its brim turned up perched crookedly over his ears. He hitched up his baggy trousers and limped across the alley, his bad hip aching in the damp; looked back at the rusted and faded blue truck with *Hutchins Light Hauling* along its side in greasy, dirty yellow. Left the door open, he thought, goddamn. Damn memory's goin', there ain't no doubt. But he still had ears, and the guy said 451 Blake Street, he *knew* he did.

The Flame: he'd started going there at seventeen, when he worked at the market across from Schlosberg's department store. Now Schlosberg's was gone, knocked down for a condominium. And the Flame had been dead for how long now? Ten years at least.

On the wall by the door was a faded poster: THE MARINES ARE LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN. It made Elmer remember the last time he'd gone to the Flame. It was during the war, spring of '43. And afterwards he'd gone to a bar and got bombed and made the decision, signed up. Fort Dix and Europe. Battle of the Bulge. He shook his head and whistled "Jesus" between brown stumps of teeth. Raw rain dripped in puddles at his feet.

He stared at the dark, imposing wall, the stained and moldy bricks. Why hadn't they cleaned out the place before now? And why had they called him? The building was huge, he'd have to make a hundred freakin' trips. He shrugged. Well, he was only here for an estimate, nobody said he *had* to take the job.

On the massive door-frame peeling paint said, *No admittance, ring bell*. He pushed the button, heard nothing. Water dripped on his hat, the pigeons gurgled high above his head. He pushed the button again. He waited. Nothing.

Suckered. Jesus Christ, some son-of-a-bitch had suckered him. But why? Who the hell would want to pull—? He was turning away when the door scraped open a crack.

A burly guy with a bouncer look, thick cauliflower ears. He raised his eyebrows. "Yeah?"

"Elmer Hutchins, Hutchins Haulin'. You called me, right?"

"Oh, yeah. Come in."

Elmer stepped inside. A dim red bulb poked out of the brown brick wall. In the background muffled music, upbeat jazz.

"So where the hell were you?" the rough-looking guy said. "You couldn't find the place?"

"It's a long drive from where I am," Elmer said. His nose felt sudden stuffiness, the smell was sour, damp. "Lotta traffic today." A muted trumpet, cymbals—and whistles and shouts. He frowned. "They still . . .? I thought this place—"

A woman's angry voice, a flash, a rustle of heavy velvet and she was there: a redhead bathed in dim red light, stark naked except for a glittering G-string and high-heeled shoes.

"Jesus, Murphy, I froze my ass off, give us some heat for Chrissakes! I ain't doin' no second show unless I'm warm!"

"Keep yer voice down, Lily, they'll hear you out there." The woman stared at Murphy hard, goose bumps on her ample breasts. "I turned the heater up an hour ago, it takes time."

"Aah, time my frozen ass. Now Trixie's coolin' her tail—" Again Elmer heard in the background the bump-and-grind music, more whistles. "—and when she's done she'll land on yer head too, you ape."

Elmer tried not to stare at the redhead's astounding flesh. Nobody told him the Flame was back, it musta just started again. They probably needed to haul off the crap that was sitting around all those years. But why did they have him come now—when a show was on? Somebody musta screwed up.

The background music loud, climactic—sharp trumpets, brisk cymbals, a drum roll, *thump!* Then shouts, applause.

"Murphy, I don't feel no heat! I swear to God, I ain't goin' out there unless—"

The thick velvet curtain parted again and the redhead was joined by a blonde with long breasts and sharp hips. "Christ, you can't even work up a sweat!" the blonde said. "This place is as cold as a morgue, what's the big idea?"

Beyond the curtains a man's voice said, "And



next on the Billy Pagan Revue ..." and Elmer thought: Billy Pagan! Is *he* still around? Christ, I saw him when I was a *kid*.

"... that king of comedy, that clown of clowns..."

"Well, ape?" Trixie said. Murphy held up his hands. "Hey, girls, hey, gimme a break. Like I just got done sayin', I turned it up. Rollie set it at forty last night and it's gonna take time—"

Once again the thick curtain parted. The face of another man appeared, a thin, pale, bony face. "Hey, Murphy," it rasped through ratlike teeth, "let's go!"

"Good Christ!" Murphy said with startled eyes, "now look what you girls done! Get out there, Hutchins, yer on! You goddamn girls..."

"Me?" Elmer said. "What? Me? I came here to—"

Murphy grabbed him, pushed him forward. "Come on, get out there, they're waitin'!"

"For *me*?" And Murphy kept pushing, pushed him through the heavy curtain, and there he was in the wings, he could see a slash of light, the stage, and the thin-faced man looked mad. "Hurry up, hurry up," he whispered hoarsely, a frantic edge to his voice; and he grabbed Elmer's other arm, pulled, shoved—and Elmer was out on the stage.

**T**he spotlights stunned his eyes. He was vaguely aware of the balcony, black shapes of shoulders, heads, then saw the spread of bodies below in the dark. Directly down in front was the band. The bandleader—bald and paunchy, with a thin moustache—was staring. All was quiet. In spite of the chill, Elmer started to sweat.

Somebody snickered. A few people laughed. Elmer's throat closed up. He looked to the wings. Murphy stood on one side of the stage, the thin man stood on the other side glaring hard. Elmer shrugged. The thin man scowled and Murphy made a fist.

Sweat poured down Elmer's face. Frozen, staring straight ahead, his tongue a leather flap, he stammered, "Ladies and, uh, gentlemen..."

His voice rattled starkly around the walls. He stood there, paralyzed. He had never been on a stage before in his life, not even in grammar school. His face felt numb; he thought he might faint. He forced his lips to move. "Uh, ladies and gentlemen," he said again, though he saw no ladies, only bald and gray and shaggy heads of men. His voice made echoes, dissolved.

He glanced to the wings where Murphy threatened; licked his gums, stared back across the lights. "Hey, listen, there's some kinda mix-up," he said in a shaky voice. "I come down here to haul some

junk, and the next thing I know ... I'm out *here*."

Dead silence. Slick with sweat, he hitched up his baggy pants. A suspender came loose with a sudden snap, flew up, and cracked his eye. He held his face, pain rocketing into his ear—and the audience howled.

He stood there, hand over his eye, as the throbbing died. He slowly took his hand down, squinting, said, "Hey, no, you got it all wrong, that was just a *mistake*." He whistled the "s" in "mistake" through his shrunken gums, and the audience laughed again. He clutched at his falling trousers, clipped his unruly suspender back in place. "Hold on a second, wait," he said in a louder voice. "I mean it. I don't belong out here, I ain't no comedian. I'm a junk man, nobody, a *failure*." More laughter, some shouts, and somebody yelled, "Yeah, tell it, man!"

"A junk man, that's all," Elmer said. "A total flop. I ain't never succeeded at nothing in my whole life!" He stepped forward to dodge the glare (the light like needles scattered on the dark)—and he tripped. "Good Christ!" he shouted, catching himself. A quick drum roll.

The audience roared. An odd thrill raced through Elmer's chest, his heart sped up. He looked at the band. The drummer—tall and pale, a huge mop-top of carrot-colored hair—was grinning crazily.

"I'm tellin' ya, I don't know any jokes, my life's a bore. It always has been a bore, a goddamn mess all the way."

"Tell it!" a voice cried again. And other voices yelled, "Let's hear it! Come on!"

"Hear what?" Elmer frowned. "How my mother died when I was ten? How my old man drove a cab—and raised five kids on a cabbie's pay? Tell that?"

Another drum roll. Shouts of, "Yeah, that's it, go on!"

"I worked in the market across from Schlosberg's—a couple of blocks from here—when I was twelve. Had to, old man smashed the cab up, got laid up for a year, we didn't have no dough—except what me and my sister brought in. No disability in them days, brother, just me and my sister Jean."

Sporadic clapping, some listless cheers. Elmer held up his hand. "That's right. Twelve hours a day I worked till my old man was back on his feet. By then I was fourteen, feelin' my oats, I was used to work—so no more school for me. I was a hotshot, had plenty of dough, you shoulda seen my clothes." He grinned. "And baby, look at me now." He hitched up his tattered pants again. The audience chuckled, guffawed.

Elmer wet his lips and grinned again. He tried to see the faces down below, but all was black. "I even came here to the Flame," he said. "Philly was wide open back in them days, this joint was jumpin',

you shoulda seen them dolls!" He pointed to the balcony and said, "I useta sit up there."

"Come on," someone shouted, "an old sack of bones like you?"

"I'm talkin' over forty years ago," Elmer said. "That's where I sat, a steady customer." He flashed his gums, his stubs of teeth. "Oh yeah, I liked the women then, believe me I did!"

The drummer laughed, the bandleader laughed, and then the audience laughed.

"Oh, I was a hotshot all right. Knew all there was to know about the birds and bees. Met this sweet potato named Molly and fell in love. My first girlfriend—and damned if I didn't knock her up!"

At this, the spectators snapped to life: crisp laughter, sharp applause.

When the noise died down Elmer said, "We got married of course, that's what you did, there wasn't no abortions or nothin' like that. Christ, what a match! Them first couple years we fought like cats and dogs! But I was faithful to her, no foolin' around." A rush of laughter then, long, loud.

Elmer looked to the wings. Both Murphy and the thin-faced man were grinning; and now the two dolls were standing there too, in robes, arms crossed, enjoying it. He faced front again, excited, flushed, and said: "That first kid was a boy, and then we had another one, don't ask me why." He shrugged his skinny shoulders. "You know how it is." (Some snickers down front: the trombonist.)

"But I liked them little guys. Sweet kids. I used to play games with 'em after work. I was workin' for J. C. Kelly scrap metals, out in the yard. I was makin' out fine. Things was pretty good, I couldn't complain, me and Molly was startin' to hit it off—then World War Two comes along."

**H**e paused a second, swallowed. The dark was quiet. He said, "Now here's where I make a mistake. A mistake, Christ, it's a disaster! I got this bad hip, see, arthritis, born with it. Two kids and a lousy hip, I coulda got outta the service easy. But I got this thing about duty, see, I'm *patriotic*. I don't even wait for the draft, I sign up. Don't tell 'em about the hip, and they take me in."

"And I'm over there two years. France, Belgium ... I seen the worst. The Battle of the Bulge! Jesus, you never seen such a shootin' match! And I was there!"

"Hey," a voice in the blackness yelled, "he's a hero!"

Against the fall of laughter Elmer grinned and said, "Okay, okay, but I didn't *have* to go in. Two years in them trenches, the cold and the rain, and my hip was screwed up for good. My God, did it hurt! When I come back I have to take shots for two years just to get some sleep!"

"Two years in the cold  
and the rain,  
and my hip was screwed up  
for good.

My God, did it hurt!  
When I come back  
I have to take shots  
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just to get some sleep!"

The crowd found this  
terribly funny.

---

The crowd found this terribly funny. The saxophonist played a little trill.

Elmer tugged at his pants again and licked his gums and said, "Now while I was away, things wasn't exactly standin' still stateside, of course. I go back to see Kelly—and the sucker's a millionaire! Scrap metal during the war? You'd have to be a total fool not to make a mint, and Kelly wasn't no fool. So I ask him for my old job back, and—he says no!"

The audience cracked up. The drummer was laughing and shaking his mop-top head. "That's right, he says no! I'm over there gettin' my ass shot off so that he can get rich, and he won't even give me a job!"

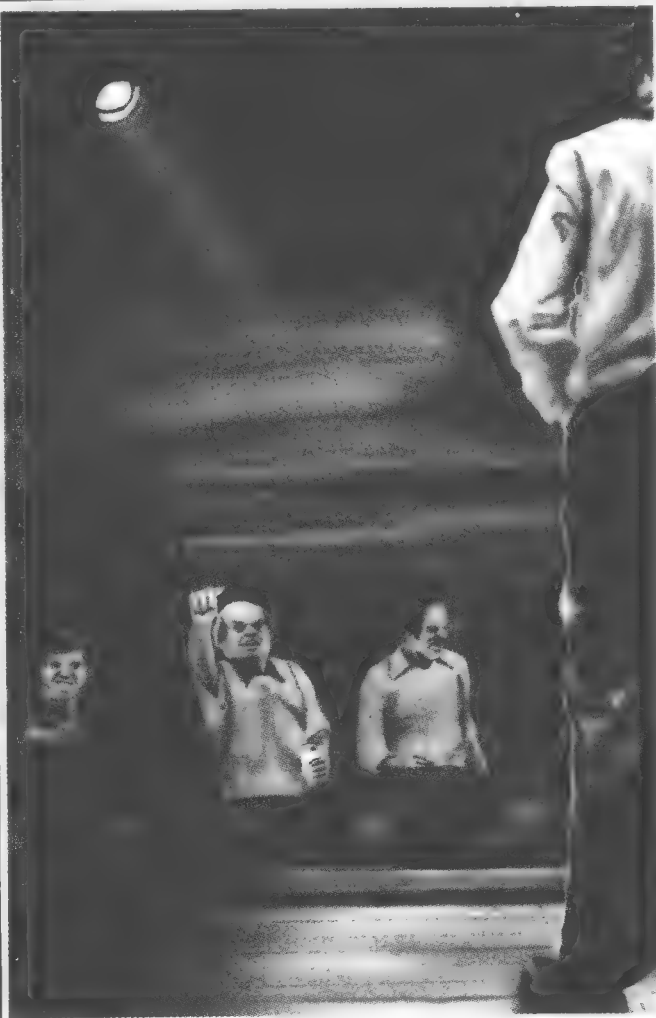
The place was pandemonium now. The dark walls rang.

"That's right!" Elmer said. "So I tell him to shove it, strike out on my own. Scrap metal, paper, all kinds of junk, I'll show that Kelly creep. And guess what? I done it for over thirty years—and just about survived!"

When the laughter died down again he said, "Hey, that ain't all. Let me tell you about my boys. Good kids, really sweethearts when I go away—and when I come back they don't even *know* me. And I don't know *them*. What a couple of brats!"

As the audience screamed, Elmer held up his hands. "Wait, you ain't heard the best part yet. My wife, my sweet potato Molly, who I was faithful to? Even over in France, believe it or not? Well, she's got a little surprise for me. While I'm fightin' the krauts, she's foolin' around—and another blessed event is on the way!"





This was just too much, and the crowd went wild. Whoops and shouts and cackles and cries. The band was doubled up.

Elmer waited a full three minutes before it calmed down. He was smiling a foolish, sunken grin. "And what a kid!" he said. "A little girl in a great big hurry, couldn't wait nine months; come out in seven. Three pounds, two ounces—scrawny little red-faced water rat, you never seen nothing so ugly in all your life."

The goofy redheaded drummer was caught in a spasm. He laid his sticks on his drum and clutched his gut.

"But get this," Elmer said. "This little girl, my little Alice—who her old man was I'll never know—turns out to be a prize. She's a beauty, a peach. And my boys? Let me tell you where they are now: One of 'em's out in L.A., a hotshot ad man, brings in more dough in a year than I seen my whole life, the other one's in Kansas City—insurance company executive. They ain't had nothin' to do with me in years. You know why? Because I never took 'em to baseball games! I'm bustin' my hump fourteen hours a day to make ends meet, and all they remember is—the baseball games I never took 'em to!"

He looked across the field of darkness, over the glare of the lights. The rustle, the murmur, were electric; he could *feel* it. "Now another mistake," he said. "Wait'll you hear *this*. I take all the money I save and stick it in a hotshot scheme to pay for my

boys' education. My wife's crazy brother says that the deal's a sure thing. I lose my freakin' shirt! So the boys have to work their way through college, and now they hate their old man. But my little Alice—who ain't even *mine*—she thinks I'm great!"

Even Murphy was laughing now. The dolls were grinning and chewing their gum, the thin-faced man was beaming.

Elmer rode on the energy of the crowd. Then all at once it was gone. A weariness hit him, he sighed. "Ah, Alice," he said. "Used to curl right up on my lap. My little pussycat, I called her."

"Oh, how *cute*," a voice in the front row said.

"She'd bring me my coffee, I'd read her the funnies..."

"Who could ask for anything more?" said another voice.

Elmer stared through the lights. He was frowning now; beads of sweat rode the grooves in his forehead. "But you see, she was never strong," he said. "So scrawny at birth, always sick with one thing or another. She was six and a half when she caught the disease. She got real pale and didn't have no energy, lost weight, her eyes got dark, there was nothing nobody could do. We went to five different doctors. Nobody could help. Ten months of that torture and she died."

A chuckle up front. From the back of the theater, a laugh.

Elmer shook his head, sweat shining in the light. "No, no," he said, "you don't understand! I'm not kidding, it really happened, she really *died*."

More laughter, and somebody said, "Oh please, oh stop, I can't *take* it!"

Elmer looked at the floor, sudden pain in his eyes. "To see that kid suffer like that, I swear to God, I wish she'da never been born." He looked at the blackness, mouth quivering now, and said, "Jesus, it damn near killed *me*. My wife went to pieces. Stayed in bed all the time, stuffed herself fulla candy and cake, watched tv. Got as fat as a goddamn elephant." As the laughter rang on the walls, he said, "Even now, after all these years, there are nights I can't sleep. I keep seein' her. Alice, little Alice..."

**H**e stood there, brushing away the tears, till the audience quieted down. Then he said: "Well, what can you do? Pick a different mother who ain't gonna die? Stay in school when your old man's laid up? Stay out of the service when Adolf Hitler is tearin' the world apart? Yeah, I coulda did that, I *shoulda* did that, I had that bad hip and two kids. But I *wanted* to fight, I wanted to help the good old U.S.A."

"Hey," somebody yelled, "yer a martyr, right?" The voice was brutal, harsh. Elmer looked at the band; the drummer's smile was gone.

The sweat was coming in rivers now. He mopped it up with his dirty bandanna, said, "I thought I was doin' right—goin' into the army, puttin' in all that time at work. What was I supposed to do, forget about the work and go to baseball games?"

The bandleader chewed on his cud with a sour face. "Yeah, yeah. Come off it, pops."

Elmer's eyes had a desperate look. "My brother-in-law said we couldn't miss. Wire recorders. Right after the war. A terrific investment, he said." He paused and stared into the silence. "Well, you woulda made the same mistake, I bet."

"Don't count on it, chucklehead," somebody shouted. A couple of people booed.

Elmer pressed his lips together, his jaw was tight. "My little Alice was turnin' out swell," he said. "Don't I get some credit for that?"

"Not from *me* you don't," someone sneered. Sarcastic laughter. The band looked bored.

"I done what I could to build her up, I give her vitamins. I didn't have the dough to take her down the shore or move to the country. Anyway, who says it woulda helped?"

"Hey," somebody shouted, "he gave her vitamins—and she died!" More laughs.

"You think that's funny?" Elmer said. "A little kid dying like that, and you think it's *funny*?"

"If that ain't funny, what is?" somebody yelled, and someone else shouted, "G'wan, can it, ya bum!"

"I just want to forget!" Elmer said. He winced. His mouth quivered, he bit his lip. "I don't want to think about it anymore, I just want to forget!"

"Hey, he wants to *forget*," somebody cried. "We *all* want to forget, Bozo!" And now, through the thick dark silence, movement; people getting up to leave. The bandleader's face was angry, hard. "Hey, wait," Elmer said, "don't go, you gotta let—"

"We don't gotta let you do nothin'!" a harsh voice roared. Then another voice yelled, "Take it off!"

Elmer stared through the lights in confusion: dark bulky shapes, the milling, grinding crowd. "Take it off?" he said.

"Take it off!" came another shout. Then the chant began, "Take it off, take it off, take it off!"

"I won't!" Elmer cried, the sweat pouring over his cheeks. "I won't take it off, goddamn it, I've had enough!"

Horrendous jeers, a deafening, angry roar. And Murphy was out on the stage and had Elmer's arm in a viselike grip and hustled him into the wings. In a flash the band flared up, the blonde pranced on, the claps and whistles began.

"What the hell's the idea?" the thin-faced man said, his cheeks flaring red in the blood-red light of backstage. Murphy squeezed Elmer's arm.

"I was doin' good," Elmer said. "I was doin' *damn* good."

"You didn't take nothin' off," the thin man said. "No," Elmer said with a head shake. "No, I ain't goin' to, neither."

The thin-faced man sucked his teeth in disgust and said, "You coulda went all the way, you fool!" He nodded to Murphy and said, "Let him go."

When Elmer was free he said, "What did you want? I come here for trash, you send me out there, make it all come back—" His voice was wavering, cracked.

"No excuses!" the thin man hissed through clenched teeth. "Understand?" His eyes glittered, burned.

"There's such a thing as the breaks," Elmer said.

"We *know* about breaks, pops. We don't wanta *hear* about breaks—good or bad. Now get goin'."

"Get goin'," Elmer said. "I don't even get paid? For all I did? For all I said?"

"You'll get paid outside. Now scram."

"Outside?" Elmer said. "What kind of an operation—?"

"Outta here, pops," Murphy said; yanked Elmer's arm and pulled him toward the door. Jerked it open and pushed him out.

The rain had stopped. The sun cracked through a cloud, struck Elmer in the eyes as he thought, Get paid outside, there's nobody here! Those crooks! Then the thought made no sense.

He stood there, dazed, the memory of brassy music fading in his ears. And the memory of faces fading, a thin man, a tough-looking man, two sharp young broads, a redheaded man with a drum; and superimposed on them all the face of a child: a blond-haired little girl, nobody he knew.

He squinted against the light. There was his car, his navy blue Chevy, parked across the way. As he looked at the license plate—*Pennsylvania, The Keystone State, 1943*—he thought: Why did I pull in here? What the hell am I doing here? I'm in back of the Flame!

On the wall near the shining green door was a poster, a boat going under the sea. LOOSE LIPS SINK SHIPS, it said. Had he really been thinking...? Good God, a wife, two kids, a bad hip... and he'd thought of *enlisting*?

He laughed to himself and walked to his car. The clouds were whipping away in the sun, the street was drying fast. He slid behind the wheel and checked his watch. Twelve thirty-five.

He looked in the rearview mirror, adjusted his tie. Twelve thirty-five on a sunny Saturday in May and he felt terrific. He turned the key; the engine purred. A great day for baseball, he thought as he pulled away. It was Connie Mack's A's and the St. Louis Browns this afternoon at Shibe Park. The kids would love to see that game. Even Molly might want to go. 17





# PREMONITION

by  
Jack Wodhams

WAS FATE GIVING HIM A SIGN—OR JUST PLAYING HIM FOR A FOOL?

**T**he thoughts crept out of his mind and enlarged as he slept. A sense of dark menace grew insidiously at every step. In his dream he was seeing, yet he could not get his eyes open. He wanted to turn around, to find out what was behind him, but inexorably he was led on, unable to turn aside.

In glutinous slow motion he took familiar steps, and fear began to chew at his vitals. He fought to retreat, to halt the awful progress, but was unable. And inevitably he was brought to observe a beloved figure, to draw closer and closer, coming up behind her, fiendishly taking her by surprise.

When she turned around, all he could do was stare at his mother's face and see her eyes widen with horror. It was so vivid: she was mortally afraid. Clearly *something* was threatening her. In his nightmare he was but a witness, a helpless bystander, struggling, aching to help, but restrained by appalling bonds of bodilessness, being only an awareness, in the presence of something that was all the more intimidating for being completely unknown.

Thrashing in his bed, he wrenched to overcome the overpowering hindrance, flailed up and out from the constriction of his blankets, lurching, almost falling out of bed, to surface clawing.

He awoke abruptly, gasping. His limbs were trembling, his body soaked in sweat. For some seconds he remained tense, his heart pounding, his mouth wide, sucking in air. Then he reoriented himself to reality, to a temporary relief, and slumped back against his pillow.

For a while he was content that he had suffered no more than a bad dream. But then he recalled his mother's face. She had been terrified. The idea that she might indeed be caused some actual harm distressed him. It had been a very odd dream; so many things got taken for granted. With a pang he realized that he had been neglectful, perhaps, of his mother's needs, had given her less thought lately than he should have. So much was presumed. She was all right. She said so in her letters.

Disturbed by the lingering evil that had permeated his vision, and recalling with clarity the detail of the fright etched into his mother's face, he switched on the light and scrambled from his bed. He padded over to his bureau, opened a drawer, and retrieved the last letter she had sent him. He returned to his bed and read her words over again.

"Dear Gary, Marion's wedding has gone off very well ... What a pity you are now so far from England and were unable to attend ... Your sister has sent you some cake and some photos ... She and her new husband are going to America to live, at a place called South Fork ... You in Australia, all so scattered now ... Gary, your brother Ben called passing through ... He's on holiday ... My arthritis is playing up again, but Doc T. says it could be the weather ... Wind broke the lock on the back door ... When Mr. Elberton comes back, I'll get him to fix it ... You know Mr. Tolph next door? Switches off his hearing-aid ... won't listen to his wife anymore, but she keeps talking just the same ... Last of the harvest ... Most of the pickers have gone now ... The leaves will soon be turning yellow. It must be nice where you are, Gary, so warm in winter ..."

He read to the kisses, then read the letter again. A nagging thought entered his brain, to reinforce his imaginings. With Marion gone, the old lady now had the house to herself. She was alone. She was no longer as fit as she once had been. The Tolphs next door were useless. And on her other side was an empty block.

With a trickle of apprehension, Gary became conscious of just how vulnerable his mother was. He thought back over his dream. The memory was still sharp, too sharp. It bothered him.

He hauled the sheets back about him and tried to get back to sleep, but slumber eluded him. The image of his mother's anguished face seemed burnt into his retina, and it persisted, no matter how he tried to push it aside and convince himself that the occurrence had no more significance than any other fancy.



## PREMONITION

He got through the rest of the night, but even daylight did not entirely dispel his unease. He went to work as usual, but thoughts of his mother kept coming to his mind. He remembered so many things about her, so many things that he had not dwelt upon for a long time. It made him feel guilty, it made him feel selfish, that he had given no real consideration to her circumstances. As with many another, he had taken so much for granted.

He wrote his mother an amiable letter to ease his conscience, and mailed the aerogram away at lunchtime.

That evening he went to a party. He had a good night's sleep. He went to work. He spent the next evening at home, watching some favorite programs on tv. He slept well again.

Friday, payday, he went to work. He looked forward to the weekend. He had a date with Cheryl, his third with her. She was interesting. There was a wariness in their circling, but a promise that they might discover rapport. They met briefly Friday night for a drink, before she went on to her ballet practice. Saturday they would reserve, to share with each other at the beach.

But Friday night there was a repetition of his nightmare. This time it was worse—stronger. The sensation of impending disaster was overwhelming, insistent, claustrophobic. He did not want to retrace this journey to his old home, but the dream carried him relentlessly forward. Dread choked him; it was palpable. As a villain, he saw an approach to his mother's back, knew her to be in the gravest peril, *knew* beyond a shadow of a doubt that she was about to suffer attack.

He yelled out, "No!" And she turned. And her face became brittle—was stunned, struck, shattered—and he heaved up shouting, "No! No! No!"

He came to, clutching his rent pillow, his body again wet with perspiration. His mother was in danger. The picture was too forceful to be denied. Somehow, in some way, he was being warned. His mother was in danger. The threat was undeniable; it had the certainty of intuition. He had been warned once. He had deliberately chosen to circumvent the implications, to make excuses, to ignore the foreboding. Now the threat was closer and more intense. Someone, some *thing*, had an evil intent toward the old lady and was planning, scheming, perhaps even now instigating its vile design.

This time Gary could not shake it off. It haunted him. He could not stay in bed. The sense of immediacy almost made him whimper. He would be too late. He had been crass to reject the first clear signal. He had heeded not, and the penalty was the cost of vital days. His mother was in peril for her life. He was certain of it. It was not a question for rationality. He fretted and asked himself what he could do.

If he was wrong,  
if it *was* just  
a nightmare,  
then he could laugh  
about it afterward.  
But if it was  
more than that . . .

Useless to try and contact Marion. He thought of cabling Ben, but the content of what he anticipated was not something that he could convey briefly and coherently, to be confident of a rapid response. Gary twisted, ducked, tried to cull plausible excuses for evasiveness, lit a second cigarette, paced his room. But it stayed with him, and there was only one answer—no, two answers.

He could wait, do nothing, let it happen. And it *would* happen. And he would be notified, in due course, of the . . . circumstances of his mother's death. How would he feel, after having experienced such potent precognition? It made him feel sick. Such a sense of helplessness was insupportable.

He could not afford to fly home. There was his job. He just couldn't leave. There was Cheryl . . .

The hell with Cheryl! His mother was in danger. He swore. He simply could *not* carry on as normal, behave as though he was unconcerned. The worry would nag him. The suspense would be unbearable. If he was wrong, if it *was* just a nightmare, then he could laugh about it afterward. But if it was more than that, as in his bones he knew, the guilt would oppress him for the rest of his life.

He swore again. He did not *have* nightmares. He began to get dressed.

Once the decision was made, the steps for its implementation went into action with an irreversible domino effect, one thing to another with commendable efficiency, from the very first query about flight times. He was in a hurry. He communicated his need for priority, and became swept up by a system that was ready to assist him achieve his desire. In a matter of hours he was on his way to Sydney, and by midday Saturday he would be seated on a flight bound for Singapore.

It was unreal—to break so precipitously, so completely. He had left two weeks' rent and a note for Cheryl: "Gone to England. May be late back." He could smile at the thought; he *would* be back. Thank God his passport had been in order.

High in the clouds, he wondered if he was being a fool. Probably. A stupid idiot, in fact. But he was answered by an inner feeling of peace. He was *doing* something; for the moment, the nightmare was in abeyance.

He obtained writing materials from the stewardess. He wrote a letter to his firm, explaining his sudden absence, his fears for his parent's health, and requesting temporary leave. To while away the time, he wrote a couple more.

It took longer to get to Singapore than he had imagined. Flying was so fast, everybody said so.

At Singapore he had to change planes and wait three hours. Three whole hours. It vexed him. He had time to take a short guided tour, but the promoters were wasting their time trying to sell him on the notion. Going into hock, he had assumed that he would fly, fly, fly until he got there. To hang about, going nowhere, was most aggravating.

Again he was touched by a sense of urgency.

It was nearer four hours than three before his scheduled flight taxied down the runway and ran through its checks, before gathering speed and lifting off for Karachi.

Weather conditions at Karachi were unsettled, and the aircraft was diverted to Bombay. This upset the timetable; the pilot apologized for the inconvenience to passengers intending to transfer at Karachi, and detailed alternative arrangements.

As they circled Bombay awaiting permission to land, Gary was again seized by apprehension. He had thought that his active journeying might have allayed his fears, but in truth he began to feel himself become a victim of a conspiracy. Evil forces seemed at work to hinder him, to slow him down. Sunday night. He had to be home by Sunday evening. Why this definition, this sharpened time frame, he could not say. The weekend. Drunks, criminals, persons with idle time to fill, to watch, to follow, with no fear of interruptions from tradesmen, postmen, gas-meter readers, and the like on their rest day.

More than ever he became anxious to get home.

There were formalities at Bombay that drove Gary nearly out of his mind: transferring passengers, waiting for passengers who should have been picked up in Karachi. The airline footed the bill for diversionary occupations, entertainments, sightseeing. Gary was angered by the carelessness, the lack of consideration shown to persons like himself who wished for nothing but to *move*.

He chased around, looking for alternatives, trying to find a more immediate flight offered by any airline on the European run. He tangled with obfuscation, dumb interpreters, misdirection, and the limitations of his economy-class ticket.

In the end he just felt terrible. It depressed him to be so impotent. When eventually the call came to board his flight and resume his progress, his mood was bitter.



Somewhere between Bombay and Rome he snatched a few moments of fitful sleep. He was late. He was going to be too late. He was filled with massive regret for not having left earlier, on Wednesday, when the first vivid vision had assailed him. fleetingly the nightmare returned; he started awake, gasping. The aircraft thrummed softly, surreal in its reassuring normality.

It took ages to reach Rome.

**R**ome was a scheduled stopover—in spite of the delays elsewhere. It was incredible. Changeover of pilots and crew; aircraft servicing . . . Gary could almost *feel* the amorphous little devils who were hanging from his shoulders and heels, adding invisible lead to his feet so that his pace might be critically slowed.

He did not feel well. The hobbling of his imperatives made him chafe to a degree that could almost draw blood. Uncharacteristically he made a nuisance of himself, arguing his necessity with plaintive doggedness. And after being shuttled from one area to another, this time he *did* manage to rearrange his flight plan and get his ticket switched, enabling him to catch a plane to Paris, which in turn promised a faster connection to London.

In Paris he lost his luggage, hunted it, rescued it, ran sweatily through the terminal to make his connection, misread the descriptions, joined a queue to board a wrong flight, had his mistake finally discovered, missed his correct connection.

He almost wept. He was trying so hard. He was so tired. His condition was such that Reception called up medical attention for him; a nurse gave him a sedative, and he was taken into a small room and urged to lie down for a while. He struggled to deny their well-meaning ministrations, but they read his ticket and his agitation, and they drew their own conclusions. They would attend to the matter, sir, they assured him. He would be on the very next flight of the very next aircraft bound for London. Just rest for a moment, sir, they advised him soothingly; there was nothing to worry over.

Mother. On his back he stared at the ceiling.



# PREMONITION

He did not know what pills they had given him. He resisted sleep. He knew that if he slept, the nightmare would come roaring back into his head.

What time passed Gary did not know. His memory of getting up, of being led by smiling, helpful airport personnel, had edges of fantasy.

Over the Channel he looked out the window and wondered where he was. It was dark. He made efforts to regather his wits, to break from his lethargy, to become once more actively alive. When a stewardess came by, he called her over, asked her what day it was. She gave him a most curious look. "Sunday," she said.

"Morning or night?"

"Night," she said. "Would you like a cup of tea or coffee?"

He shook his head, sank back into his seat. Where had the time gone? He was going to be too late. There was a cold, cold stone in the pit of his stomach. He would never make it. He prayed that he was wrong. He prayed that, after all, it would prove to be nothing more than a ghastly dream.

Yet dread persisted to infiltrate his every fiber.

The closer he got, the more desperately urgent he became.

And nobody understood. The customs people displayed no briskness at all. Gary's impatience inclined him to voice his displeasure, and his stridency drew him an attention that defeated his purpose. He had to get out, escape, get to his mother.

In a moment of lucid insight, he became aware of how he was sounding, and he became instantly afraid that he might be thought mentally unstable and be detained for further investigation. By a huge effort of will he got himself in hand, retailed how ill his mother was, his anxiety, how far he had come, how tired he was.

After a thorough examination of himself and his luggage, he received sympathy and directions to further transport.

**F**rom the airport to the city, in the city to a station. No train for hours. He thought of hiring a car. He should have thought to catch an internal flight, perhaps, or a charter while he was at the airport. It hadn't occurred to him.

Early Monday morning now. It was no time to try to go anywhere in a hurry. Everything took so much time to organize. He even had a crazy idea to try and steal a car.

He couldn't get there. He was overtaken by the dull ache of fatalism. He'd done his best. He couldn't make the trains run so much earlier.

It was confusing. It was still night. He could not remember having had breakfast. He did not

know if he was hungry or not. He went to see if he could find someplace open to get something to eat.

The train ride was mindless, laden with its portent of anticlimax and futility. If his instincts were correct, he was already too late. If his dream was pure fancy, his need for haste was vain.

He had to change trains—more waiting!—to catch one on a slower, all-stations branch line. It was only as he started reaching stops that brought him closer and closer to his destination that some sense of anticipation was reawakened in him. By the time the carriage pulled into his home platform, he was again possessed by nervous excitement.

There was something familiar, a déjà vu, about what was happening. He leapt from the train and ran to the barrier as he knew he would, flung his ticket at the collector, and sprinted for a taxi. It was insane. He thought he even recognized the driver.

He hurled the address, bounded into the cab. "Fast as you can! Please! It's most urgent!"

It was with him again. His nightmare hadn't been dark. It had been—*was*—sunny, a bright morning. His mouth and throat became very dry. He could yet be in time. The whole *feeling* was exact. It was the nightmare come alive.

Sweat broke all over him. "Faster, please! Can't you go any faster?"

"I can't go through red lights, mister." Nevertheless the driver did his best, wove and sped, Gary on the edge of his seat, the reality, the certainty, the weirdness of this replay clutching his throat, yet oddly numbing him with its daunting connotations.

When they reached the house, Gary did not wait for the cab to stop. He thrust some bills at the man, jumped out, and ran to the front gate. There was a hammering in his head. This was the scene, he knew it—the moment. It was exactly as his nightmare had portrayed. A cry escaped him, a sob. His mother was under threat *now*, seconds away.

His emotions were precisely those of his dream, a fear that something ugly was about to happen, that his mother was in dire peril. He vaulted the front gate, loped down the path. The front door was open, as he knew it would be. He burst through, then halted, panting, his eyes searching desperately for the evil.

His mother was there. She was reading the mail that the postman must just have delivered. Startled by the sound, she turned at Gary's entrance. She looked at him, and her eyes widened. He recognized the expression. She took in his disheveled appearance, his wild, unshaven, haunted face. Horror came to her eyes. She gaped, gave a small scream, clutched her chest, and keeled over, fatally shocked.

The aerogram from Gary fluttered unheeded to the floor. 17

# Forerunners of 'The Twilight Zone'

by Allan Asherman

IN THE BEGINNING, TV WAS DARK AND WITHOUT FORM.  
THEN SOMEONE SAID, 'LET THERE BE LIGHTS OUT ...'

Not too many decades ago, the concept known as "television" was just a fantasy. Later, with advances in technology, the notion moved into the realm of science fiction, and eventually it became a reality. The amazingly short interval between the introduction of television as a new electronic marvel and its acceptance into our daily lives may account in part, for the early popularity of tv productions dealing with these same two genres, fantasy and science fiction.

Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone*, because of its unique creative scope and its integration of provocative science-fictional concepts with contemporary sociological issues, still enjoys popularity and critical acclaim. It is certainly the most important television series ever to have explored the fields of sf, fantasy, and horror. However, it was by no means the first.

In the 1940s, television presented old Hollywood feature films as filler material, usually cut apart and emceed by available celebrities. The first television "series"—today the mainstay of the medium—had only one model from which to evolve: the radio series. Early tv series were either pieced together overnight or modeled upon their radio counterparts. They were broadcast *live*, and structurally they were bizarre combinations of radio dramas and stage plays, using filmed footage only for credit sequences, an occasional special effect, or an establishing shot.

In 1935, the series *Lights Out* had debuted nationally on radio. Its hor-

rifying dramas of suspense and the supernatural, introduced by its host and author Arch Oboler, quickly earned the sort of reputation later enjoyed by *The Twilight Zone*. Oboler, like Serling, became forever identified as someone who took the audiences into unknown realms of fear and the imagination.

This series (also known as *Arch Oboler's Plays*) carried its resemblance to *The Twilight Zone* an important step further in the second decade of its existence when, in 1946,



A decade before he became *The Twilight Zone*'s henpecked Henry Bemis and a host of other characters, Burgess Meredith was a Martian incognito in "The Martian Eye," a 1950 episode of *Lights Out*.

NBC aired four special television segments of *Lights Out*. These individual episodes, produced by Fred Coe with sets by Bob Wade and technical direction by Bill States, proved so popular with tv audiences that in July of 1949, *Lights Out* made its debut as a full-fledged tv series on the NBC network. Ernie Walling produced the show, which was telecast live each week from New York City's WNBT studios. The series was a pioneering effort for television, and its directors—Kingman Moore, Hal Keith, and Albert Grews, among others—were forced to cope with severe technological and budgetary limitations. (Director Moore came with valuable experience, having served as production assistant for RKO's 1949 feature film *Mighty Joe Young*.)

The program's various narrators—first Jack LaRue, then Frank Gallop and Boris Aplon—introduced episodes that grew increasingly ambitious as the series's popularity grew and the sponsor (appropriately, the Admiral Radio Company) raised the budget. In 1949, relatively unknown actors performed in the dramas; by 1950 they featured many of the bigger names in Hollywood. Guest stars included Grace Kelly, Boris Karloff, Burgess Meredith, John Carradine, Veronica Lake, Raymond Massey, Anthony Quinn, Eli Wallach, Vincent Price, and veteran actress Una O'Connor (who had screamed at *The Invisible Man* in Universal's 1933 film).

More important than the fine





Michael Rennie played the title roles in the 1956 Climax production of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

casts, however, were the effective scripts. There were adaptations of such old standbys as Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Masque of the Red Death," with Hurd Hatfield, and "The Pit." (Perhaps the Pendulum was omitted for reasons of budget.) Nathaniel Hawthorne was represented by "Rappaccini's Daughter," with Eli Wallach, and "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment" (both adapted by Hal Hockady). Robert Louis Stevenson appeared, too, with "The Bottle Imp" (adapted by R. E. Davis).

An impressive list of contemporary authors also contributed to *Lights Out*. Under a new producer, Herbert B. Swope, Jr., science fiction and suspense specialists contributed many segments of the show, including Alfred Bester's "Of Time and Third Avenue" (adapted by William Welch); Ray Bradbury's "Zero Hour" (adapted by George Lefferts); Henry Kuttner's "The Third Door" (adapted by Edgar Marvin and starring Vincent Price) and "The Martian Eyes" (adapted by George Lefferts, with Burgess Meredith as a three-eyed native of the Red nest Kinoy); and Manly Wade Blum's "Strange Case of J. Klingman" (adapted by Erwellman's "The Meddlers" (adapted by Douglas Gibson, starring John Carradine) and "School for the Unspeakable" (adapted by Rich Davis). Ira Levin contributed "Leda's Portrait" and "The Pattern." Also represented

was Lucille Fletcher, with "The Intruder" (starring Chester Morris and Jane Wyatt) and "The Upstairs Floor" (starring John Forsythe), years before her classic radio play, "The Hitchhiker," would be adapted into the famous *Twilight Zone* episode.

As the scripts for *Lights Out* became more ambitious, so did the show's technical side, in experiments that paved the way for future television series. The newly developed special effects were not random inserts; they were designed to contribute to the show's dramatic impact and overall appearance. The audience saw an entire episode, "First Person Singular," through the eyes of the murderer: the commission of the crime and the pursuit, flight, arrest, trial, conviction, and—in the final fadeout—the execution (by hanging). One episode's leading character was a shapeless, shadowy ghost who proceeded to explain how he had gotten that way. In another story's repertoire of effects, *Lights Out* became the first television series to make dramatic use of a split screen, dividing the image in half to reveal both sides of a telephone conversation. These devices, which we take for granted today in both motion pictures and tv, were radical steps forward in the early 1950s.

Like *The Twilight Zone*, *Lights Out* ran a total of 153 episodes. Its final broadcast came in September 1952, at the end of its busiest year, during which fifty-two segments were produced. Its appearance had paved the way for competition, and during its run two other series had appeared, *Tales of Tomorrow* and *Out There*, though they accented science fiction rather than suspense and horror.

*Tales of Tomorrow*, produced by George F. Foley, Jr., debuted in August 1951, on ABC. Produced live in New York City, its premiere was preceded by a gala press party staged in the Hayden Planetarium. In attendance was a "Woman of Tomorrow," dressed in a short skirt and a large hat complete with television antenna. She was accompanied by a "Man of Tomorrow," dressed in a similar fashion but in masculine style, minus the antenna, and a space-suited traveler of the spaceways who introduced a slide show, by Fletcher Pratt, of a tour around the wonders of the universe. All of this was accompanied by plenty of food and by strange music played on

a "theramin," an electronic instrument also used on *Lights Out*.

Despite these initial impressions of frivolity, both the sponsor of *Tales of Tomorrow*, Kreisler Watchbands, and the producer maintained from the start that their series was intended to be an adult science fiction program. To assure an adequate supply of scripts, Foley and packager Dick Gordon sought help from the Science Fiction League of America, with the stated goal of bringing science fiction to the mass adult television market. After suitable negotiation, the series purchased dramatic rights to some two thousand stories by outstanding sf authors.

The premiere episode, aired on August 3, was entitled "Verdict from Space." Starring actors Lon McAllister and Martin Brandt, the show was directed by Leonard Valenta and scored by Clark McClellan, with sets by Robert Bright. The script was by sf writer (and now TZ book columnist) Theodore Sturgeon.

By 1953, however, *Tales of Tomorrow* had drifted away from hard-core science fiction; executive producer Mort Abrams had shifted the emphasis of the series toward fantasy. Gone were episodes such as "Ahead of His Time," in which scientist Paul Tripp invented a time machine and found himself catapulted into fame, and "The Discovered Heart," in which



While adults were watching *Lights Out* in the early 1950s, their children were following the exploits of Captain Video (Al Hodge, left) and his Video Rangers (led by Don Hastings, right).

a young girl befriended an entity from outer space. Teledramas like "Frankenstein" (with Lon Chaney, Jr., as the Monster) and "The Dark Woman" (about a woman who never grew old) now became the order of the day. The Science Fiction League was not happy.

Despite the changes, *Tales of Tomorrow* presented many interesting ideas. A segment entitled "Dune Roller" concerned a mysterious white-hot rock that kept growing in size, menacing a family vacationing in a beachside cottage. In "Herr Doktor" a robot fell in love with its creator (portrayed by Mercedes McCambridge) and killed itself by deliberately blowing a fuse. Boris Karloff starred in another episode as an unscrupulous time traveler who journeyed back to 1910 to make a fortune introducing penicillin to the world; unfortunately he died of pneumonia while futilely at-



Future rocketeers of the '50s could also tune in to *Rocky Jones: Space Ranger* (Richard Crane, here with Sally Mansfield).

tempting to convince his doctor to administer the drug to him. At the tale's end, the doctor eulogized his dead patient, musing about how wonderful it would be if a variety of mold actually did have such widespread curative powers.

Another tale, entitled "The Window," was a sort of television extension of the radio play "Sorry, Wrong Number." In the original version,



A young Vincent Price played host on *E.S.P.* in 1958.

crossed telephone wires enabled a woman to overhear a plot to murder her. The updated version had, within the story, the television public receiving accidental transmissions—a freak signal, bouncing from some unknown part of New York City—that allowed them to watch a murder plot being hatched. In the episode, the imaginary viewers kept phoning the tv station with clues which aided the police in finding the location of the murder site, but not before the victim had already been killed.

Just as these viewers failed to save the life of the murder victim, the fans of *Tales of Tomorrow* were unable to keep the show from being canceled. In a case of turnabout, however, *Tales of Tomorrow* was heard briefly as a radio series before it left the tv airwaves in 1953.

*Out There* enjoyed an even shorter running time. It debuted in October 1951, on the CBS network and lasted until January of the following year. The series was created by Donald Davis, produced by John Haggott, and directed by Byron Paul and Andrew McCullough. Some of its scripts were based upon original stories written especially for the series, others on tales previously published in the science fiction books and pulp magazines. Its premiere episode was adapted by Elihu Winer and McCullough from a *Saturday Evening Post* story by Andrew Doar. The plot revolved around an air force captain (played by Robert Webber) who is kidnapped by the captain of a flying

saucer a hundred miles above the surface of the earth during a secret rocket test. The alien commander (Wesley Addy) is visiting our planet on behalf of the "Intergalactic Council" to determine whether we are civilized enough to continue our existence or dangerous enough to merit the alien vessel's destruction of our planet. A conversation between the two individuals, interspersed with glimpses of the air force captain's worried wife (Augusta Dabney), causes the alien to decide in Earth's favor. Reviewers of the premiere effort noted that it was very similar in structure to the 1951 Twentieth Century-Fox film *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, in which a visiting alien also judges humanity's right to survive among interstellar civilizations. The live tv show's prefilmed special effects were applauded; the script was not.

While these efforts were in progress and heroes such as Captain Video and his Video Rangers, Tom Corbett: Space Cadet, and Commander Buzz Corey of the Space Patrol were zooming around the airwaves, still more tv programs were presenting tales of fantasy and science fiction. Several "mainstream" dramatic shows got into the act with highly acclaimed adaptations and original dramas.

*Chevron Theatre* ran "The Secret Defense of 117," *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry's first television script, starring Ricardo Montalban, in 1952. That same year Broadway Television Theatre aired productions of



A not-yet-Bewitched Elizabeth Montgomery teamed up with Joe Cronin and Robert Sampson in 1960's "The Death Waltz" on *One Step Beyond*.

"Death Takes a Holiday" (starring British performers Wendy Drew and Nigel Green) and Czech author Karel Capek's famous play "R.U.R."—about "Rossum's Universal Robots"—starring Hugh Riley (later of tv's *Lassie*). In 1956, *Climax* featured an adaptation of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" that starred Michael Rennie, who'd portrayed the alien in *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. U.S. *Steel Hour* ran Rod Serling's "Noon on Doomsday" with Everett Sloane, Jack Warden, and Albert Salmi (all of whom would later appear in episodes of *The Twilight Zone*), and *The Kaiser Aluminum Hour* aired Serling's "Mr. Finchley vs. The Bomb."

Terror-master Alfred Hitchcock hosted 265 episodes of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (from 1955 to 1962) and ninety-three *Alfred Hitchcock Hour* segments (from 1963 to 1965). These included some noteworthy studies in fantasy and horror. A 1956 episode featured Ray Bradbury's "And So Died Riabouchinska," with Claude Rains and Charles Bronson. In 1957 "The Glass Eye," with William Shatner, Tom Conway, and Jessica Tandy, explored the horrifying relationship between a ventriloquist and his "dummy." "The Foghorn" in 1958, with Michael Rennie and Barbara Bel Geddes, told the chilling tale of a woman who had spent fifty years of her life in a coma, only to die of a heart attack upon awakening and seeing her withered face in a mirror. The celebrated "Specialty of the House"—1959, with Robert Morley—introduced Spiro's Restaurant, where the lamb delicacy turned out to be a good deal more human. Ambrose Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," a version of which was later aired on *The Twilight Zone*, was

aired in 1959 with James Coburn. Hour-long frights included "The Magic Shop" with Leslie Nielsen and David Opatoshu, Bradbury's "The Jar" with Pat Buttram, and "The Sign of Satan" with Christopher Lee and Gia Scala, all in 1964, and "The Monkey's Paw," from the W. W. Jacobs short story, with Jane Wyatt, Leif Erickson, and Lee Majors, in 1965.

Other vintage television series that dwelt upon fantasy and horror include *Suspense* (1949-53, CBS), *Crisis* (1949, NBC), *Starring Boris Karloff* (1949, ABC), *Mystery Theatre* (1949-51, DuMont television network), *Hands of Mystery* (1949-50, DuMont), *Danger* (1950-54, CBS), *The Clock* (1951, ABC), *The Web* (1951-53, CBS), *Dark of Night* (1952-53, DuMont), *The Dow Hour of Great Mysteries* (1953-56, ABC), *Inner Sanctum* (1954, syndicated), *The Vise* (produced in Great Britain 1954-56 and aired on ABC), *The Stranger* (1954, DuMont—an attempt to imitate radio's highly successful hero, *The Shadow*), and *The George Sanders Mystery Theatre* (1957, NBC; guess who hosted this one).

Although many television series of the 1950s tackled the supernatural, one of the few to major in sf, and to

handle it with dignity, was *Science Fiction Theatre*. This series was the creation of Ivan Tors, a native Hungarian who'd studied science at the University of Budapest and had gone on to study writing and English at Fordham in 1939. After a stint in the U.S. Army and the O.S.S. during World War II, Tors wrote screenplays for MGM studios (including *That Forsythe Woman* in 1949) and, in the early fifties, became a film producer for United Artists with several notable sf features to his credit, including *Gog* (1953), filmed in 3-D, *The Magnetic Monster* (1953), starring Richard Carlson, and *Riders to the Stars* (1954), which Carlson—co-starring with William Lundigan, Herbert Marshall, and Martha Hyer—also directed. Tors produced a number of television shows dealing with underwater and animal themes—*Sea Hunt*, *The Aquanauts*, *Flipper*, and *Daktari*—as well as the sf adventure series *The Man and the Challenge* (1959-60, NBC), starring George Nader as Glen Barton, head of something called the Human Factors Institute, a prober of mankind's physical and mental limitations. Other than his animal shows, however, Tors's most successful effort was *Science Fiction Theatre*.



Rocks fell from the sky onto a small Midwestern town in "Where Are They?"—a 1961 episode of *One Step Beyond* featuring Philip Pine, Alan Dexter, and Joan Tompkins.



The show was produced in 1955 and '56 at Frederick Ziv's studio in Hollywood and broadcast over NBC. It's worth noting that, by 1955, the tv industry had become a microcosm of the film industry; live television was almost a thing of the past. Ziv Studios was the first tv production facility geared for color work, and the color episodes of *The Adventures of Superman*, *Sergeant Preston of the Yukon*, *The Lone Ranger*, *The Cisco Kid*, and others were all filmed there. Approximately half the *Science Fiction Theatre* episodes were shot in color, a luxury accounting for a good part of the show's budget. As a result, other production costs were held to a minimum: background music was "canned" (stock) music from Ziv's library (it was also used in the studio's other series) and special effects often relied upon sequences lifted from Tors's feature films.

Like other producers before him, Tors was concerned that his "science" elements might overshadow the elements of character and plot. He therefore devised a system to make sure this never occurred. At the initial story conferences, the writers would meet to come up with a dramatic plot line based loosely on some scientific premise. Only after the details of plot and characterization were worked out would the program's scientific consultants be called in for their conference, at which they'd devise a technological "frame" around the story to solidify the writers' concepts.

Several universities provided the necessary research for *Science Fiction Theatre*; the series's official technical advisor was Dr. Maxwell Smith. Each episode was introduced and concluded by host Truman Bradley, who, in what appeared to be a laboratory, discussed the episode's underlying scientific principle, usually reminding his listeners "This story could happen tomorrow."

Among the notions presented were sound waves used as a lethal weapon; a nervous disorder that rendered its victims impervious to pain (and to pain's beneficial warnings); giant reflectors capable of destroying aircraft (in scenes lifted from *Gog*); and a bank robber who became "The Bullet-Proof Man" after wrapping himself in a thin metal foil he'd found in a crashed flying saucer.



Another *One Step Beyond* episode, "Goodby, Grandpa," had Edgar Stehli as an old man who tells his grandson (Donald Wylie) he must be leaving soon.

Some stories involved inventions that were science fiction at the time but have since become realities, such as a portable device to monitor a heart patient's vital functions while he was at work; a truck capable of cruising outside people's homes and determining which tv stations they were watching (which, in the show, worked fine, until it indicated that one old man was observing the nonexistent "Channel 84"); and an automobile driven by remote control (in an episode aptly titled "The Driverless Car").

More fanciful tales featured inventions such as a camera that could take pictures of individuals' "thermal residues," thus photographing a murder after it had been committed (unlike *Twilight Zone*'s "A Most Unusual Camera," which photographed future events); an antigravity device that was used to build the pyramids in the extremely eerie tale "And the Stone Began to Move"; and a device that recorded the brain waves of a dying scientist, in this way preserving his thoughts.

*E.S.P.* was an odd quiz show aimed at locating contestants who actually possessed psychic abilities. Aired in 1958 on ABC, it was hosted by Vincent Price. After only three episodes, the producers decided that their format wasn't working—something they needed no psychic to tell them. The title was changed to

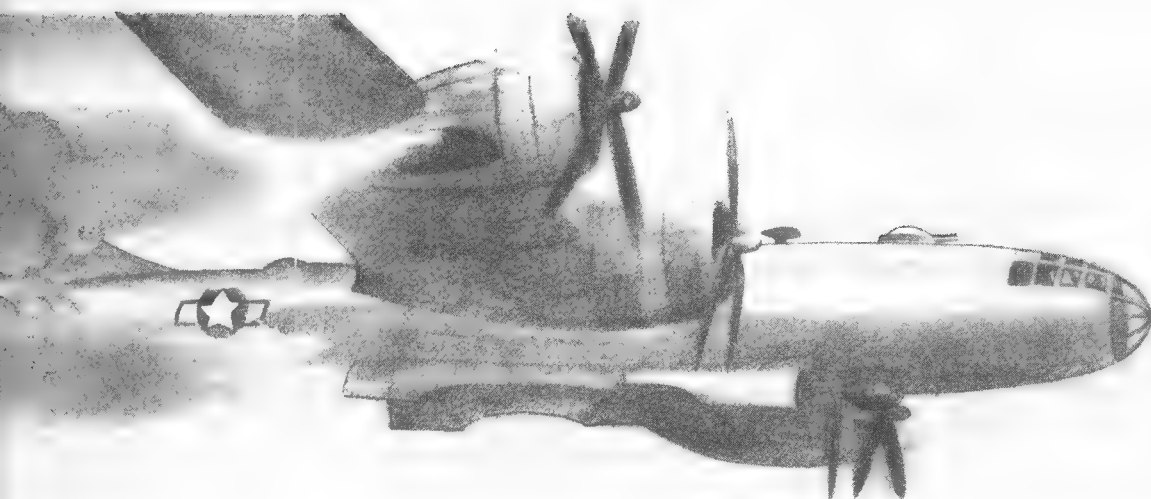
*Tales of E.S.P.* (with Price still as host), and the series now featured dramatic stories of people with paranormal powers. Despite the changes, however, the show soon went off the air.

*Alcoa Presents*, better known by its syndication title *One Step Beyond*, was the collaborative effort of Merwin Gerard, the series' associate producer, and John Newland, its director, host, and one-time-only guest star. It was seen on ABC from January 1959, through October 1961. None of its ninety-four episodes dealt with straight science fiction; the focus was on the supernatural, and each segment was purportedly based upon an actual experience. As "your guide into the unknown," host Newland told audiences that they had all taken small steps into the unknown and that they were now about to encounter someone who had "taken a giant step."

The series got a giant boost of its own from composer Harry Lubin, whose fully orchestrated scores for the show were both nerve-racking and beautiful. He would later supply music for the second season of *The Outer Limits*. Two of Lubin's melodies appeared in every episode of *One Step Beyond*: a main-title theme called "Fear" and a quiet little tune called "Weird," which heralded the most bizarre scenes. Both selections combined string instruments and electronic effects, backed by a soprano, and both could scare the spit out of you if you happened to be watching alone in the dark.

Most of the episodes of *One Step Beyond* were written by Merwin Gerard, Collier Young, and Larry Marcus, although *Twilight Zone* contributor Charles Beaumont wrote a couple. All were effectively structured toward a dramatic "punch line": the appearance of a ghost, vengeance from beyond the grave, *déjà vu*, a premonition, telepathy, astral projection, or some other phenomenon. Little attempt was made to explain how the events took place; the show's primary aim was to make viewers, in effect, witnesses of the supernatural. Like tv's other excursions into this realm, the series's best episodes kept audiences on the edges of their chairs, and despite the fact that most of the manifestations averted catastrophes and saved lives—they made it awfully hard to fall asleep afterward. 17





# ***STROKE OF MERCY***

*by Parke Godwin*

IN TOMORROW MORNING'S DUEL MORE THAN JUST ONE MAN WOULD DIE.  
A WORLD WOULD DIE WITH HIM.

**A**ll Paris knows that Lord Berkeley is notoriously reckless of his life. Since he is also more skilled with a pistol than I, he will doubtless kill me at the appointed hour in defense of what he is pleased to call his honor. The more honor will redound to his name if his adversary is considered sane and not a visionary lunatic.

With the heightened perception of madness, I appreciate the comedy of the situation. We are both from countries in which dueling is outlawed. Burr killed Hamilton two years ago on my native soil, but it cost him his political future. Berkeley's England has frowned on dueling for a century. Paradoxically, it is here in Paris, the most civilized city in the world, that we come to this pass.

Berkeley came to play, of course. Arrogant, idle, and rich, he has for a year and more indulged

himself with the generosity of a ruling class that bequeaths moral restraint to their commons without tax by the peerage. Paris did not corrupt him; its *laissez-faire* only obviated that discretion demanded at home.

For myself, my name is Ethan Flagg. A modest patrimony has allowed me to study literature and philosophy at the Sorbonne, a living I augment in a clerical post at the American Embassy.

Berkeley and I are of an age, three and twenty, but only he is young. I am aged with a sickness of the mind. Or let me pray that I am. At worst, to die at his hand will put a period to those nightmare visions which have tortured me since I was twelve years of age, visions that do not change but evolve, becoming clearer and more detailed until they sear now into my waking as well as sleeping hours with a



In the moment  
before he struck me  
I imagined I perceived  
something quite alien  
that peered from  
behind Berkeley's mask;  
as if he were  
an actor aware of a role,  
laughing not at me  
but at us together  
on a foolish stage.

sharpness of resolution consistent as it is hellish. Denise knows something of these dreams. Though I never speak of them, I sometimes wake her at night crying out in their incomprehensible patois. They are not to understand. They are horrors.

Denise—Mlle. Denise Laureenne—is the cause of my quarrel with Berkeley. As an American without class or fortune, I was devastated with happiness when she lavishly returned the attentions I commenced after seeing her perform in *l'Opéra Comique*. We are well matched, content together from the first. If she is a few years older and more experienced, if Berkeley's insolent face leers from her recent past, I care not. Most of this infected life I could discard with ease, saving those hours which she inhabits. For her sake I am committed and likely doomed.

Berkeley doesn't care a rap for Denise now. She is *déclassée*, yesterday's diversion, her name to be banded freely about the Anglo Club to a ripple of cognizant laughter. What I could privately ignore was intolerable when he fronted me with it in the club billiard room. He chose his time carefully for the largest audience.

"But surely *la Laureenne* has mentioned me to you?"

I looked about at the ring of his faintly sneering companions who had left off their billiards to enjoy my humiliation, though I still attempted to keep my voice lowered.

"This is not a subject for discussion in a gentlemen's club."

Berkeley took snuff with an air of studied boredom. "Demme, sirrah, are you a gentleman? It seems the definition has broadened."

"Berkeley, as you were once her friend, I urge kindness—"

"Toward whom, sir? Herself—or you?"

"For her sake, if your breeding will not suffice."

He did not expect such a ready riposte. He laughed negligently—or with the appearance of negligence—careful that his friends missed none of

our exchange. "Oh come, my dear . . . Flagg, is it? We are men speaking among men. I found her quite amusing."

My retort was the more scathing for its truth. As Denise put it, the well-worn shoe is a good judge of feet. She had mentioned Berkeley, and she is nothing if not candid. "That was her word, my lord: *amusant*. She catalogued you in humorous detail as a clumsy simpleton at *amour*. Clumsy or tedious, I do forget."

Berkeley's smirk faltered. His friends edged closer like a circle of hounds around two of their breed embattled. "You are a demmed liar, Master Flagg."

"Am I so?" With icy precision, then, I proceeded to a probing corroboration of this or that particular, even to the private details of his person, which left no doubt as to the veracity of my account or Berkeley's lamentable lack of finesse with women. Poor man; as I advanced from proof to proof the flush of vicious triumph that colored his inbred features darkened to murderous anger. That he had enjoyed Denise before me was to have been his coarse joke on a common clerk. That she found him hopelessly inept was my distilled revenge. The laughter of his friends was of a different timbre now.

Berkeley was in deadly earnest now, perhaps even in pain. "Master Flagg, you will retract every word of this."

"But why?" I sank the dagger to its hilt. "Are we not men speaking among men? It is to laugh, my lord. As she did."

In the moment before he struck me I imagined I perceived something quite alien that peered from behind Berkeley's mask of malicious ennui; as if he were an actor aware of a role, laughing not at me but at us together on a foolish stage. But it was merely my distorted judgment; he has no such sensitivity. His open hand whipped across my cheek.

"You—shop boy!"

Thus the sad comedy begins. These affairs are straitly codified in Paris. Cards of address were exchanged, the Viscount Hampton volunteered as Berkeley's second while I was advised to engage one of my own. If we could not compose our differences, the meeting would take place no later than two mornings hence when a doctor and a suitable place had been found. Someone mentioned the convenient privacy of the St. Germain district . . .

Denise considers the duel sheer folly and urges me to apologize to Berkeley, as if it were not her honor he derided. "My honor, Ethan? *Là!*"

How desirable and dear she is, her face framed in dark curls kept very short for the wigs her roles demand. She has seen most of what the world offers women and can no longer be disillusioned by any of it. Those tight *gamine* curls framing the sad

warmth of her eyes is a delightful contradiction for me.

"*Mais, bien merci*, I have not such an honor. What I have is a good life with you. That is more important. For Berkeley"—her shoulders lift and fall in a gesture only the French can render eloquent—"he is a sad fool, sadder than you guess. Let it go."

"I cannot."

"But why? I do not feel dishonored. *C'est comique*."

May you never know just how comic, Denise. "But the comedy is not ended."

"Ah, *zut!*" She throws up exasperated hands. "You men. It is not my honor but your own pride."

"He insulted you."

Denise smiles. "France herself has been used to insult since Julius Caesar. Everyone who fancied conquest has found his shortest route through Paris. She has learned to relax in the supine position, as have women. Men take what they want, women what God sends them. So we survive; it is the world."

"And am I just one more conqueror?"

"*Non, mon cher*." Denise holds out the arms I can never deny. "When God sent you, he was feeling generous. Come: do not talk, but love me."

In her all-cleansing embrace I enjoy the only sure sanity I have ever known. Later, as Denise slumbers beside me, I stare wakefully at the moon sinking beyond our window and ponder the shape of time. There are heady new forces abroad in the world. France has built in blood what Jefferson and Paine conceived in noble experiment. The old order, Berkeley's order, is dying, but what will grow in its place? Rousseau eulogizes the perfectible human spirit with no title but Mankind, Beethoven's new symphonies are hammer strokes at the chains of tradition, but what Prometheus do we free?

And so the sickness comes over me as it spreads insensibly over the face of time. I begin to perspire profusely. Thank God Denise is asleep; perhaps this time she can sleep through it. The blood pounds in my ears; I grind my face into the pillow. The sensation of nausea engulfs me. I resist, pray with my whole being. God help me, I am here now in Paris. It is May 15, 1866. May 15. It is—

**J**uly 3, 1863. The sun's baked Gettysburg bone-dry for three days. Lieutenant Cushing's tunic is open and the front of his red underwear sticks to his chest. I'm stripped down to drawers with a bandanna around my head and tight over my ears. The sky is made of loud iron, the whistle and scream and boom of shells. Yesterday Lee had eighty guns bearing on this hill; today there's more than a hundred and twenty. He's tried our flanks for two days, and we threw him back. Old Robert E's got to fish or cut bait today. First he's got to knock out Cushing's guns.

They're trying. The Southern batteries have shelled us for two straight hours. Not the whole line, just us. We're down to three guns. The rest are junk along with their crews, and every God-damned cannon in the Army of Northern Virginia is pointed across the valley right at me.

Cushing chews a dead see-gar, staring at the trees on the opposite slope. "Why'd Lee wait? He coulda took us yesterday before we dug in."

"Down!" We flatten out as the shell screams over and explodes somewhere near number four gun. Sure enough, someone pipes up: "Number four gun. Short in the crew."

Cush leans his head against the wall, eyes shut, tucked out. "Flagg, get that gun firing."

I round up three ammunition carriers to fill out the powder-grimy crew. It's just quarter of three. We're loading number four when it happens.

"Here they come."

Across the valley the blue Virginia flag bobs out of the covering trees, flanked by gray ranks, wave after wave of them, moving down the slope like a slow tide.

"That's Pickett."

"Prime . . . ready."

"Stand by to fire."

Pickett's Virginians are part of Dutch Longstreet's command. Old Dutch is a cautious man, but he's held off too long this time. There's all of Hancock's corps behind this wall. We've faced Pickett before; we know his brigadiers.

"There's Kemper."

"And Garnett."

"And that old dandy, Armistead."

My men stop talking. They know what's going to happen. Pickett's men must move across the valley bottom with no cover at all, every inch of it boxed and known to our guns. Nobody talks about that anymore. My mouth is full of cotton, watching them come on so slow in such straight marching order. They're leaving wounded like a leaky bucket; you can follow their path by the gray drops.

They halt once to give us a rifle burst. Off to my left, someone screams with a high, gurgly sound like a butchered hog.

"It's the lieutenant. They got Cushing."

Cush is shot through the mouth and crotch, the worst kind of wound. He won't last till night, but I can't think of that now. There's fifteen thousand Johnnys crossing the valley, more people than I ever saw at one time, and Armistead's brigade is running now, straight at me. I pick up Cush's sword—waving a sword in my dirty underwear; that's what I'll remember about Gettysburg—and run hunched over back to number four, while a fat mother-hen staff officer reins up his horse and sits there like someone was going to take one of those glass-plate pictures of him.

# STROKE OF MERCY

"You there! Who's on Mr. Cushing's guns? Who's in command?"

I jam the sword upright in the ground. "Me, Flagg. Stand by, one, two, and four."

"Prime . . . ready."

"Fire!"

Another shell comes in way too close. "They got Schulz's whole crew. Number one's out."

"Fire!"

My throat is raw with smoke and screaming. We swab, load, prime, and fire. The world is all black and red and that one roar tearing out of my lungs. *Fire . . . fire . . .* There's another roar, dull and far on our left, that I realize is our other batteries as they tear into the remains of Pickett's lost division. The gray ranks are ragged and thin now, no longer anything like lines but still coming. The smoke blossoms out and blows away to show bigger and bigger holes where men ain't anymore, like a boy scooping up lead soldiers from the floor with both hands. But Armistead staggers on toward me with the pitiful remains of his brigade.

"They're too close, Flagg. We're shooting over."

"Battle range! Battle range! Run 'em down!"

The gun is flattened out to point-blank range. We work like maniacs over it, see nothing, know nothing except the gun.

"Fire!"

"Fire!"

"Fire!"

"Number two out."

"Fire!"

Armistead reaches the wall in front of us. He's wounded, but he jumps the top and gets as far as the muzzle of number four, waving his damned fool hat on his sword, yelling for his men to follow. He sees me too late as I swing Cush's sword two-handed. Die, you son of a—

He could've got me, but he was slow. And so, for me, the war goes on.

"They're goin' back. They're beat."

"Don't let 'em. Fire!"

We go on tearing up Pickett like old newspaper as he limps home over seven thousand bodies. I want to yell at George Pickett, touch him, make it personal, somehow, because it's getting damned hard to be a person anymore.

"Pickett, you—"

You what? You were a person once, too. They tell me you were one of those damned Daguerreotype-posing fools who loved war. You could still live like that in '61, but there's no way now. Seven thousand bodies in the valley down there, divided between a few cannon. How many are mine? Three, four hundred? I never broke a law in my life and I've killed more men than the busiest murderer in his-

tory. I thought about that at Bull Run the first time my gun tore up a line of Johnnys. I can't think of it now, it costs too much. You used to dream of swords and honor, Pickett. I wonder what you'll dream to-night.

We swab the gun and let it cool. The war goes on.

**D**enise makes our morning chocolate and discreetly absents herself on the arrival of Berkeley's second, Viscount Hampton. Son of the Earl of Albemarle, young Hampton is cap-à-pied the high-blooded dandy in fitted doeskin breeches and Gieves-tailored coat. He stands with the distance of my worn carpet between us, as if to tread on it would soil the soles of his mirror-polished boots.

"Master Flagg: Lord Berkeley has instructed me to accept your public apology."

"*C'est dommage*. I had hoped you brought his."

"Then, as it is . . ."

"As it is."

Excellent lines for comedy. One can see Kean in my role, though I hear he loves life.

"The pistols will be Gastin Renettes loaded with the fullest allowable charge," Hampton advises. "There will be heavy recoil and less accuracy. On the other hand, in the event of a hit . . ." He elides the thought, searching me for any sign of wavering, finds none and continues. "He leaves it to you to choose a single discharge at will or exchange of shots until one party is sufficiently wounded."

"One shot at will."

Our business is concluded, yet some atom of humanity stays Hampton. "Flagg, I cannot fault you alone in this affair, but Harry Berkeley has fought before. I urge you to apologize."

"No."

"You are a helpless clerk. He has wagered his life—even foolishly—more often than I can think of. Have you ever discharged a pistol?"

"Even a cannon, my lord. Indeed, there have been days on end when I did little else."

I did not think Hampton a man for irony, but he surprises me. "You are very like him: a plain brick wall. That the two of you should duel—" Hampton shrugs. "Very well. Tomorrow morning at six. The small park beyond St. Germain." His head chops up and down once, and he withdraws.

Shortly afterward my own second arrives: Rijn van den Tronck, a friend from New York City and a fellow student at the Sorbonne. He has been to see Berkeley. Stocky, blond, and apple-cheeked, Rijn looks now like a schoolboy fresh from a stiff caning.

"He laughed at me, Ethan. He will accept an apology only if it is public. He will make none himself."

"I expected no grace from Berkeley." We sit





down to the remaining chocolate and toast from breakfast. There is another important detail now, the letters I have written.

"This to my father in Washington City. In the event . . ."

"I understand."

"This to Denise."

Rijn shuffles the letters, searching for the right words. "What does she think of this?"

"I would not dwell on that. This last to yourself. It authorizes you to draw on my bank for such arrangements as may be necessary. There is a bequest for your studies. The balance to Denise."

Rijn tucks the letters in a pocket of his waistcoat. "I want no profit from this."

"Have no fear. It is not enough to embarrass your scruples."

"How do you feel, Ethan?"

"Dear Rijn, privately I am terrified for my life—as a miser fears the loss of a false penny. But I am more afraid of my sickness than of dying."

"These dreams you will not speak of: would you confide them to a physician?"

"I dare not. I should be barred up in Charenton for life."

"What are these dreams?"

"Parts of hell."

"And you will not tell even me?"

Tell Rijn? I peer into that stolid *yonker* face, its expression a testament to a sane universe and the ever-improving spirit of man.

"How could I? The mercy and justice of God, the application of humanist philosophy, these are a fixed center to the wheel of your life."

"And yours, Ethan."

"Would it help you to know there is no more God?"

"Don't say that again, Ethan."

"That someday the bare truth of this will permeate the acts, if not the sentience, of the most brutish minds; that a few will accept it, even more flee from it as they have fled down the centuries from every truth worthy of the name—"

"Stop!"

"How stop? Of the most lucid philosophy, how

much has the world ever *used*? The great majority, Rijn, unable to endure the reality of God or the reality of *no* God, of personal freedom and sole responsibility, will whirl in futile circles, tearing at each other for the sake of motion. Describe this in detail? For your sanity, no."

"And you will not seek any cure?"

There is Berkeley and tomorrow.

"I seek nothing else, Rijn."

He bends across the table to grip my arm. "You can only seek while you live. Berkeley means to kill you."

"Right on, man. That mother's gonna blow me away."

The table blurs in front of me. My skin sheens with perspiration, my mind expands like a pustulant bubble. Rijn has never seen one of my attacks. He is stunned at the bastard English.

"What . . . what did you say?"

The demitasse falls from my hand, shattering on the table.

"Number one engine doesn't sound good. Skeet says there are leaves hanging off the tail assembly."

"Denise! Come quickly!"

She is at my side instantly. "It is the speech of his sickness," she says tremulously. "*Bon Dieu*, it comes day and night now. Get him to bed, Rijn. We must hold his arms."

"Hold me tight, Denise . . ."

"I will, my darling."

I feel Rijn's sturdy grip on one arm, the light, loving touch of Denise on the other. "What is today? The sixteenth of May. Say it; that sometimes staves it off. The sixteenth of May in the year of our Blessed Lord, 1806. *Say it.*"

"The sixteenth of May . . ." They repeat it with me, over and over and—

"—over the target in seven minutes."

Lt. Saylor, the pilot, sounds shaky on the intercom, like we all feel. This is a bad run. Number one engine isn't turning over right. You can feel when all four engines on a B-24 are copacetic, a deep, steady drone. You get so you hear trouble quick.

"Over the target—shit, we're under it."

The MEs dive  
through our formation  
like a school of sharks.  
Messerschmidts,  
long thin wasps,  
fast and hard  
to knock down.  
I watch them  
wheel away,  
waiting, saving ammo  
for when we'll  
really need it.  
And then  
from nowhere  
two more hit us.

Gordini's right. We're coming in at treetop level to stay under the kraut radar. That's why a screwed-up engine is bad news. No room for error at fifty feet with a full bomb load.

The kraut phone-spotters must have picked us up by now.

Saylors again: "Six minutes to target. Commo check. Copilot."

"Check," says Borowski.

"Bombardier-navigator."

Sweeney in the greenhouse: "Ding-how."

"Engineer. Hey, Garson."

"Roger, you're five by." In my earphones, Garson sounds worried. "Just listening to number one."

"Sounds bad."

"What's your temp gauge reading?"

"Too high."

"Same here. Can you ease off number one, skip?"

"Negative," Saylors says. "Not now I can't."

"She's gonna go."

"She goes, you're out of a job."

"She goes, you're out of the war."

"Bird dog it, Garson. I'll feather if we have to. Left waist, talk to me."

I hear the clack-clack, clack-clack as Gordini cocks the bolt on his .50. "Left waist, loud and clear."

"Roger. Right waist. Flagg?"

I try not to sound as scared as I am. I'm a short-timer. Five more missions and I rotate. After

the fortieth I started praying for milk runs, but it's been Ploesti all month. "Right waist, loud and clear."

"Tail bay, sound off."

In the tail greenhouse, Skeet Mahoney does a Bugs Bunny over the 'com. "Eeeahh—what's up, Doc? You're alive and five by five. What's our altitude, skip?"

"Doesn't even read."

Skeet laughs over the 'com. "You won't believe this. We got leaves hanging off the tail assembly. Purple Heart, men! I been goosed by an oak tree."

Saylors again, sharp: "Knock off the chatter. All turrets clear your guns."

I give the .50 two short bursts. Beautiful and smooth, like a Krupa drum riff. "Right waist clear."

"Left waist clear."

"Tail clear."

"Okay, pot right. Four minutes to target. Going upstairs."

I feel it in my stomach as the Liberator pulls up steep to make altitude for the bomb run. The other ships climb with us. The German fighters will be here any time now. Forty-four missions, this is forty-five, five to go. I won't make it. I was born in this waist bay, in a greasy leather flight suit and flak vest, and I'll die in it.

We make bombing altitude, sweating number one engine all the way, but we're formed and ready for the bomb run.

"Five hundred, Sween. Take it."

"Roger."

"Everybody look out for company."

Three minutes to Ploesti, the big kraut gas station. A lot of oil they won't get to use. In the nose greenhouse Sweeney is the boss now.

"Commencing run."

"You got it. Give me a heading."

"Adjust to course . . . 030."

"030, roger."

"Bomb bay doors open."

"Bandits!" Skeet squeaks with excitement. "ME-109s, six o'clock high!"

"Steady, steady."

"Easy, Skeet," I tell him. "Let 'em break first. Suck 'em in."

Sweeney barks at Saylors: "Steady on 030. Give me some trim." What he sees now through the Norden is our whole payoff.

"Correcting to 030."

"Right . . . hold it. Hold it." Sweeney's nothing now but an eye and cross-hairs and a thumb on the bomb-release button. "Hold it . . ."

The MEs dive through our formation like a school of sharks. Messerschmidts, long thin wasps, fast and hard to knock down. I watch them wheel away, waiting, saving ammo for when we'll really need it. And then from nowhere two more hit us.

"Going to seven o'clock, Skeet!"

"Bombs away!"

"Ding-how! Let's go home."

The ship jerks and lifts with the loss of the bomb weight. The burning oil rigs below tilt toward me as Saylor banks her up in a climbing turn. As we level out, the first of the flak hits us. They've got to protect Ploesti, we've been hitting it so much. The anti-aircraft cover has doubled in the last month, it's Flak Alley now, the sky is full of sloppy inkblots as the bursts blossom out. There's a flat *boof* and the screech of metal punching through metal. Someone makes an awful sound on the 'com. I twist around to Gordy.

"Hey, who—?"

Gordini's nothing but blood under his helmet. That's it, my personal kiss of death. Gordy and I started out together, one of the first crews in North Africa. If he can get it . . .

"Three o'clock, Flagg!"

I swivel around, swinging the gun. Gordy got it, not me, not yet. "I see him."

The ME turns tight and comes in with the sun behind him. White sky and a black bird getting bigger and bigger. I used to love the sky. Will I ever look at it again without searching, without fear? We all of us have that tight look now, like scared hawks that have no love for the sky but only exist in it as long as they're fast.

I give the kraut a burst and he veers off, wobbling. The waist bay is full of smoke. "What's burning?"

"Anybody hit?"

"Gordy."

"Six o'clock!"

"I'm on it."

"Way to go, Skeet."

The ship lurches as we take another burst of flak. The drone of the engines strains higher.

"Number four's burning. Fire in number four!"

"Lead 'em, Skeet. Lead 'em!"

"Feathering number four."

We're running on three engines now, and the waist is foggy with smoke. "Waist to pilot, what's burning?"

"Two o'clock! Coming around to you, Flagg."

The ME is turning in, still broadside to me, a good shot. I lead him and get off a solid burst before the .50 jams. My lungs are full of smoke. I go on oxygen as the next blast of flak staggers the ship. Borowski is screaming over the intercom, and for an awful moment I think no one's left in the cockpit.

"Sween!"

That's all I hear before the junk of our nose greenhouse falls below and behind me, Sween twisted up in it. Then number one engine starts to miss. That's bad, that's Sweat City. Two engines

gone, we'll fall behind the formation, what's left of it. Two MEs, sensing us for a loser, turn in at five o'clock. Skeet's gun *bud-dud-duts* in a short burst, and then quits. The fighters come on, eight guns wide open, tracers streaming into our tail.

"Skeet? Hey, tail! Sound off."

Skeet chokes something into the 'com.

"Pilot to waist. Get back to Mahoney when you can."

"Wilco. Where's the fire?"

"Aux wiring, no big deal."

I haul the .50 breech open, pull out the bent shell case that caused the stoppage, then yank back the bolt twice to cock it, glaring out at the white panel of sky where less than half our flight is wavering home. Lot of Maydays on the radio. We hope someone's listening, even the krauts. They crash, they ditch over Rumania, over the Adriatic, over Italy and the Mediterranean. To be captured, to be picked up by air-sea, to drown, to spend a crazy day or two drinking wine with Italians before coming home to fly again. A Purple Heart and two bucks extra on payday.

We've taken a lot of flak, but we're beyond German fighter range. "Waist to pilot. Gonna check out Skeet."

I belly along the crawlspace with the medical kit over my shoulder. The tail greenhouse is chewed to ribbons. By the time I wrestle off Skeet's flak vest and leather jacket, I'm working on a corpse. I plug into his 'com set.

"Waist to pilot. Skeet bought it. How're you doing up there?"

"Engineer, how's two and three?"

"Overheating."

"Okay, I'll try to ease her down. Flagg, get back on the waist."

Crawling back to my gun, I feel the familiar jerk and grind of the landing gear. Borowski's trying it out. This time there's more grind than jerk.

"They hit the gear. We can't lock down."

I look at the mess of Gordini behind his gun. I'm not going to make the Big Fifty, but I did this time, and so it goes on while the sky beyond the right waist bay, the curtained window, deepens to morning blue.

I am in bed, Denise sobbing against my cheek.

"The ship's junk. We had to belly in."

Over Denise's thin shoulder, Rijn holds the open Bible, praying in a low, earnest voice.

"They had to cut Skeet out of the greenhouse."

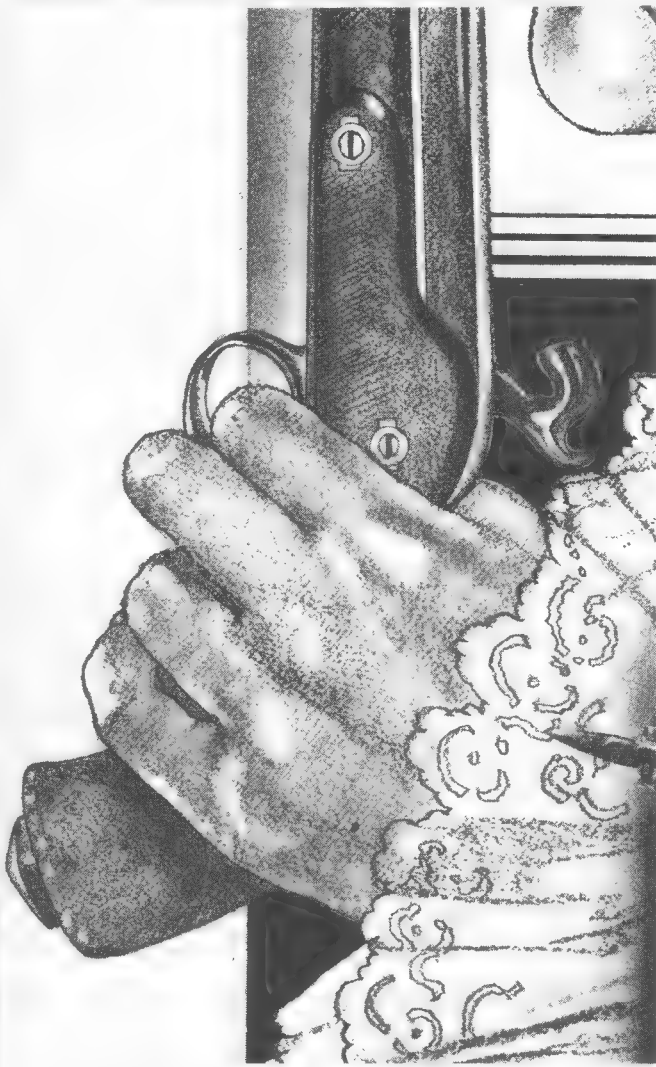
"You see?" Denise raises her tear-streaming eyes to Rijn. "You see what I live with, what I love?"

"Rijn . . . you have been praying?"

"For you, Ethan. God help you."

"I told you: God is gone. Even Satan is obsolete. There's only us."





And I stare past them to the May morning beyond our window with the self-preserving keenness of a frightened hawk. Be swift, tomorrow. Berkeley, be skilled. God has abdicated, and his throne is left to the hunting birds.

**T**here will be prisoners at Auschwitz who survive only so long as they clean, weigh, and keep accurate tally of the gold parted from the teeth of other, gassed prisoners. Like the camp officials who are more intrigued with the economy of Zyklon B than its ultimate use, they cannot afford to ponder what they do, and blot it out by concentrating on weights and the fluctuating value of gold. All true horror sheaths itself in banality.

On this early morning, the day of my death, Denise concentrates on our chocolate and poached eggs as if their correct preparation is the answer to all conflict. She speaks with studied ease about the coming evening, not about the hours in between. She will not be here for supper; she performs in *Tartuffe*. Her eyes dart again and again to the door. She listens for Rijn's step on the stair. I must pretend with her.

"We will dine in Montmartre after the theater. I fancy venison in wine tonight."

"But it is so expensive, Ethan."

"Oh, just this once. We will make a treat of it."

The footsteps thud on the stair. The napkin crumples in her fist. I rise to admit Rijn.

"The carriage is waiting, Ethan."

I turn to take up my cloak. Denise is holding it ready. She arranges it about my shoulders with a too-bright smile.

"*Bon chance, cheri*. Rijn, we dine in Montmartre tonight after my performance. Will you join us?"

He takes his cue from my imperative glance. "With pleasure."

"Why do you not both come to the theater?"

"We will be there," I promise.

"*Je t'aime*, Ethan."

I start to embrace her one last time. "You have made me very —"

"No, don't!" Denise's hands carve the shape of helplessness in the air. "Go quickly."

This is our parting. Any other would be unbearable.

**O**ur carriage rolls along the Boulevard St. Germain as the early sun splashes across doors and windows. The breeze is heavy with the scent of dew and spring flowers. It will be a warm day: good weather at Gettysburg, over Ploesti, north of Da Nang. And one day will come a wind so hot that glass melts and steel itself drips like tallow. Distant, but in three years the man will be born who orders my guns to Gettysburg. It begins.

Our driver turns the horses onto an uncobbled road. We jolt with the ruts, and I catch sight of a bare, dead tree among the greenery. Napalm does things like that.

I lean back against the upholstered seat. I know my symptoms well; it will not be a bad attack this time, more like a light doze. If I keep my eyes closed, Rijn will think I am merely at ease or praying.

We defoliated so much of Vietnam, the whole ecology is shot. Less jungle for Cong to hide in, but I know they mined this trail. Even spaced out on grass, you get a feel for mines.

August 4, 1969. S-2 said the trail is cleared of mines, but Big John steps on a toe-popper and loses half his foot. While they're dragging him off the trail, Barrio gets himself fucked up on a betty mine. The platoon freezes. Radio calls for a dust-off to pull out the wounded. Nobody wants to move. Sergeant Tuck is moving up and down the scared line, chewing ass in pure Tennessee backwoods, making one man move, then another. We go on, single file and uptight, putting our feet in the same place as the guy in front until we reach the paddy and slide into nice safe mud.

We don't need those mines, not after a week of search-and-destroy. I've been on uppers most of it and a little hash this morning. I couldn't make it any

other way. Lost too many good guys. I'm going into that village flying like the rest of the platoon. All but Tuck.

Tuck's RA, bucking for thirty years. Without the army he'd be pumping gas back in Trashville. He digs this shit; he goes after Charlies for the fun of it when the rest of us would just stay cool. He gets people wasted, guys who were real short and counting days till they got back to the world.

I don't feel much, but I can still be scared. Big John and Barrio and me were the last of the old squad. My chances have run clean off the slide rule, man. Today, tomorrow I'll get it. With hash it won't hurt so much.

The navy fighters lay down napalm, but they must be smoking themselves, because most of it goes wide. The heat is unbelievable as we move in. Napalm sucks up the air; if you don't burn you can smother.

We hear incoming: Cong 82-mm. mortars. Somebody in Third Platoon starts popping smoke grenades, figuring the Cong is still in the village. The wind blows the smoke right down on us. Nobody can see anything. We're flushing old men and women and little dinks out of the huts, all of us blind with brown and yellow smoke. A white blur of movement flickers in the corner of my eye. I wheel and fire out of reflex. It's a dink, maybe ten years old. He grabs his arm and runs screaming back into the hut.

Tuck chops his arm at the few lousy huts. "Burn 'em all. This one first if they won't come out."

"It's just a dink in there."

"What're you, Flagg? the fuckin Red Cross? Burn it."

Screw it. For all I know the dink would drop a grenade in the gas tank of someone's jeep tomorrow. I put my lighter to the roof thatch and the hut goes up fast. Tuck lobbs a frag grenade inside. It goes off like the end of the world. The roof lifts, then falls through, nothing but fire now.

The black sizzling thing crawls out of the hut and flops over, twisting like bacon on a skillet as the fire fries and splits its skin. Thank God for the hash. Used to be something like that would make me sick. But I'm out of it now, don't feel a thing. Not even when Tuck gets zapped.

One minute he's in front of me, then going over backwards with the stray round from shit knows where; maybe someone in our own platoon. Screw Tuck. He got a lot of guys scratched for nothing. The hash high makes it funny. Tuck falls and falls forever like trick photography, and I'm laughing as we pull out of the village. What the hell, I'm splitsville anyway, never gonna make it back to the world. Tuck got it, not me, and so it goes on . . .

"Ethan? We've arrived."

We alight from the carriage. Already the day

is turning humid. A hundred paces away among the trees are Berkeley and Hampton, both in black, and two other men.

"Ethan, for the last time, I implore you —"

"Let me thank you for your friendship now, Rijn. I have loved you." I fumble for his square hand, but he embraces me fiercely.

"Then for that love and Denise's, stop this. You are ill. Give him his meaningless apology. This is insanity."

"Come. They are waiting."

We move toward the assignation over wet grass that whistles about our boots, through scarlet azaleas and yellow marigolds. The forest at morning looks new-made, virginal, the sins to come unthinkable. It is a good day to leave it.

"By God, Flagg," Berkeley yawns by way of greeting. "I did not suppose you would be so prompt."

"It is a habit of shop boys, my lord."

Hampton opens the pistol case, murmuring introductions: the bewhiskered doctor still red-eyed from too little sleep, his hastily recruited assistant, a young medical student. Hampton offers the pistols to Rijn for inspection. He does not take them.

"Lord Berkeley — doctor — my friend is genuinely ill —"

"Rijn, no more."

"He is in no condition to fight."

Hampton remarks gravely, "By coincidence, Lord Berkeley himself is not in the best of health."

Berkeley inclines his head to me. "Nevertheless, sufficient to the time."

Rijn is desperate. "Then compose, reconcile."

Berkeley removes his high, buckled hat. "That consideration is past, is it not, Flagg?"

"As are many things. Give me a pistol, Rijn."

Rijn examines each weapon and offers me one reluctantly. How solid and final it feels in my hand. Hampton draws Rijn and the others to one side. "Master Flagg has stipulated a single exchange of shots. Back to back, gentlemen. Twenty paces to my count, turn on my command. Single shot at will."

Berkeley's shoulders press against mine; he turns his head slightly to me. "*Bon chance*, shop boy."

"One, two —"

We step out; the last scene of the comedy begins, an historic performance. We are burying Man as an individual. Our farce has the absurd motives of artificial honor, but at least each of us completes and understands the whole violence as the will of an individual. The conflicts to come will employ more and more men who understand less and less of what they do until they are drugged numb by the very proliferation and banality of horrors.

"Eleven, twelve —"

“Nineteen, twenty — turn!”  
 Berkeley staggers and  
 sinks to his knees.  
 Instantly Hampton and  
 the doctor are at him,  
 opening the black coat.  
 There is a spreading  
 stain on his shirt  
 just under the heart.  
 I kneel beside him,  
 feeling that there  
 has been, somehow,  
 an unimaginable mistake.

To us, freedom has an elitist meaning. To that coming mass, it will be a terror. When men walk stultified through obscenities, the last thing their atrophied souls will want is to control, to assert, to understand. As the horror grows they will hurl their missiles from farther and farther away. As the crime grows, the artificial innocence must be greater until, one day, there will not be enough distance to purchase detachment at any price.

“Nineteen, twenty.”

Is death so frightening that we must labor to make it meaningless? We are near extinct, Berkeley, having still shoulders to bear the burden of being individuals, of declaring ourselves, first and last, *responsible*. Neither of us deserves tomorrow.

“Turn!”

We whirl in upon each other like dancers, the last of an age. Berkeley’s arm comes down in mirror movement to mine. He is slim and erect before me. We are beautiful, two Greek columns, proud but past. In the wine-sweet morning the two shots merge into one explosion.

My God . . . he missed.

The pistol bucked so hard in my hand, surely my shot would have gone wild. But Berkeley staggers and sinks to his knees. Instantly Hampton and the doctor are at him, opening the black coat. Rijn runs to me, tearful with relief.

“God be praised, I need not send those letters. It is over.”

But I am hurrying toward Berkeley. There is a spreading stain on his shirt just under the heart. I kneel beside him, feeling that there has been, somehow, an unimaginable mistake that must be set right. Berkeley’s gaze is fixed somewhere beyond me, his lips moving silently.

“Hampton, how could he miss?”

“You fool! He meant to.”

The doctor opens Berkeley’s shirt to reveal the smallish wound and the larger discoloration around it. “It is very close to the heart. There is internal hemorrhaging. I am afraid . . .”

Hampton sobs over the head cradled in his arms, strangled with grief and bewilderment. “You have freed him. Harry, is it enough this time? Have you found it? Oh, Flagg, if you knew how he sought this! Let it not be on your conscience. You have shown him mercy.”

“Red Fox Leader to Red Fox Four . . .”

“He pursued death as this demon pursued him—”

“Red Fox Four . . .”

“—as if there were no God left in the world.”

“Be still!” I bend close to Berkeley as the pattering, fevered whisper rises to an audible voice. His head moves sharply from side to side, not in delirium but searching and alert. I have seen that look before: just before he struck me in the Anglo Club. Sailors had it after a month on the Ploesti run.

The doctor closes his bag. “A matter of moments. It will not help to move him.”

“Red Fox Leader!” The voice is clear and unemotional, the accent still recognizably Oxfordian but clipped and subtly shaded with overtones Hampton will not live long enough to hear spoken in London.

“Red Fox Leader to Red Fox Four, do you read me, Richard? Take the flight. No, I can’t bail out. Bloody flak got my chute . . . a piece of me too, I’m afraid. Canopy jammed. I’m burning. Romney air-sea rescue. Romney air-sea, this is Red Fox Leader. Mayday, Mayday. Can’t make the coast, losing airspeed and altitude rapidly. Course 285, airspeed 220 and falling. Going to belly in if I can. Hope you people arrive first. Mayday, Mayday. Approximate position . . .”

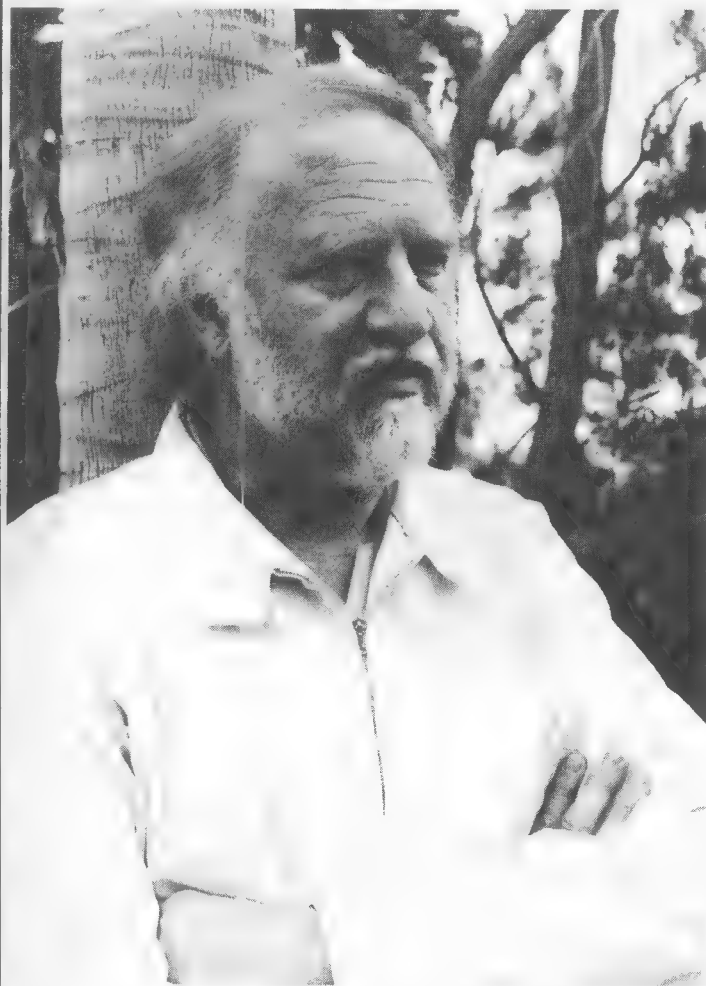
His head swivels left and right and up. Even as his eyes close, Berkeley searches a sky I have known, empty white or full of death, with the look of a frightened hawk.

Thus Berkeley’s lesson to me: the infection is spreading. Though isolated in my disease, I am not alone.

Berkeley went down over the Channel. For me the war goes on.

I hear nothing Rijn says to me. Plodding back to the coffin of my carriage, I shred the unsent letters, scattering white blossoms amid the scarlet and yellow. There is always hope. I cannot live forever. The Romantics have toyed with opium and suicide, but theirs is a self-consciously tragic muse. Mine is banality. I will dine with Denise in Montmartre and wait for good flying weather over Washington and Moscow. 17





# Richard Matheson

## on 'The Honorable Tradition of Writing'

T Z I N T E R V I E W

Interviewer **James H. Burns** reports:

*If you had to name ten of the world's best living fantasists, Richard Matheson would probably be three of them. In a career that has spanned four decades, Matheson has created a legacy of prose, ranging from the whimsical to the terrifying, that ranks him among the greatest names in the field. Of no lesser magnitude is the fact that since the late 1950s, he has been fantasy and science fiction's most reliable ambassador to the worlds of film and television.*

*Born in Allendale, New Jersey, in 1926, Matheson was brought up in Brooklyn and, upon graduation from Brooklyn Technical High School in 1943, enlisted in the army. After being released for a combat-related injury, he enrolled at the University of Mis-*

*souri, where he majored in journalism. He sold his first story, the classic "Born of Man and Woman," in 1950.*

*That sale marked the beginning of Matheson's numerous contributions to the leading magazines inside and outside the genre, including F&SF, Weird Tales, and Playboy. Almost thirty years later, those stories remain models of the form, their power undiminished. (Many of the best are still available in the collections Shock, Shock II and III, and The Shores of Space.) Complementing this shorter fiction are novels such as I Am Legend, The Shrinking Man, A Stir of Echoes, Hell House, and his 1960 mainstream effort, The Beardless Warriors, based on his experiences in World War II.*

*It was The Shrinking Man's adaptation to celluloid that paved Matheson's way to Hollywood. After penning The Incredible Shrinking Man's screenplay, Matheson began working extensively in films and tv, creating a body of work that's discussed more fully on page 51: screenplays for Burn, Witch, Burn, The Devil's Bride, AIP's Poe series, De Sade, The Legend of Hell House, Duel, The Night Stalker, The Martian Chronicles, and episodes of many tv series—including fourteen of the most famous episodes of The Twilight Zone, half of them based on his own previously published stories.*

*Perhaps in reaction to his heavy involvement with horror, in the 1970s Matheson turned to fantasy of a more delicate nature in the novels Bid Time Return—in which a writer, Richard*

Collier, journeys back in time to be with an actress, Elise McKenna, whose picture he has fallen in love with—and *What Dreams May Come*, an excursion into the afterlife.

Matheson, in person, is an impressive figure, standing well over six feet. As seems to be the rule with masters of horror, however, his manner is as gentle as his imagination is able to scare the bejeesus out of you.

One of Matheson's most recent projects was the screenplay for last fall's *Somewhere in Time*, based on *Bid Time Return* and starring Christopher Reeve and Jane Seymour as the time-crossed lovers. Though the film did not fare well, either at the box office or with critics, Matheson feels that it's the first time his particular brand of fantasy has been properly captured on film.

**TZ:** I understand that *Somewhere in Time* had to be cut quite a bit before it was released. How did you feel about the final version?

**Matheson:** I was very pleased with it. The first cut was two hours and fifty minutes long, though, so a lot of scenes had to be shortened, but the film stayed basically the same. The only thing I really wasn't too happy with was the visualization of the ending. I wanted it to duplicate Collier's and Elise McKenna's first meeting on the lake, so that the viewers themselves could decide whether or not he had gone back in time again. It could have been shot so that the audience would have suspected that it was actually happening in the afterlife.

**TZ:** The film did not get the best critical reception. Did that surprise you?

**Matheson:** I don't think that any bad reaction had to do with the way it was made. The critics just didn't like the whole concept; it rubbed them the wrong way.

**TZ:** The director, Jeannot Szwarc, was afraid that there might not be an audience anymore for that type of thing.

**Matheson:** I always had that fear. But after everybody—including Universal—seemed so hopeful for *Somewhere in Time*, I forgot about my apprehension. In retrospect, any of us who thought that it was going to do extremely well were just being naive about the market out there. I believe that there literally is no audience for that type of picture anymore. For



*"No one in my family ever took me seriously until they saw my name on television. It wasn't the books or movies that made me legitimate to them, but seeing my name on tv in their own living rooms."*

some bizarre reason, though, the film did incredibly well in Utah. It was a blockbuster there—probably because the film is wholesome and that's a large Mormon state.

**TZ:** Is it true, as I've read, that you were on hand to do rewrites while *Somewhere in Time* was being shot?

**Matheson:** I was only there for about three weeks. Looking back on it, I wish I had been there for all of the shooting. A visiting reporter said that while it wasn't exactly true that the cast and crew skipped to work every morning holding hands, it wasn't far from it. The atmosphere was great. I've never seen anything like it.

**TZ:** The townspeople must have enjoyed having a movie crew in their midst.

**Matheson:** I think so. I recall that they were showing *Superman* in the town movie house where we shot the film's theater sequences. It's quite an old theater, and one night the soundtrack went out. Chris Reeve came to the rescue by explaining to the audience what the characters were saying and what was going on.

**TZ:** Did you like Reeve's portrayal of Collier?

**Matheson:** Very much. I can't think of another actor who could have played him. He had to be extraordinarily handsome in order for it to be feasible that Elise McKenna would be as attracted to him as he was to her. At the same time, he had to be vulnerable. Most male actors today don't have that quality.

**TZ:** I'd always thought you wanted Paul Newman to play Collier, since at one point in *Bid Time Return*, Collier looks at himself in the mirror and thinks about how people have always told him that he looks like Newman.

**Matheson:** That line was in there because I was writing about myself. When I was young, I *did* look like Paul Newman. Newman's still great looking, but he's around fifty-six years old. It would have been poor judgment to have him in the part.

**TZ:** You got to do a cameo in *Somewhere in Time*. Has acting been an ambition of yours?

**Matheson:** Yes. We have a theater group out here, and I appear with it

frequently. One man saw me and asked me to play quite a sizable part in an educational film he was making, so I guess I'm not too bad.

**TZ:** *Somewhere in Time* hasn't been a financial success, but now you're involved in a project that promises to be very successful indeed: writing the script for *Jaws III*. Was that a deliberate choice—to do something highly commercial?

**Matheson:** No, I've been turning down commercial jobs for a long time, so that really isn't the reason. The prospect of trying to make something fresh out of a theme that's really been overdone by now is what appealed to me. Another reason I took *Jaws III* was that Alan Landsburg will be producing it. I've admired his work for a long time.

**TZ:** A lot of people felt that *one* sequel was too many for *Jaws*. How will you make this one different?

**Matheson:** The first sequel was, in every way, just a sequel. Even though Jeannot [Szwarc, its director] did a marvelous job considering his production problems, he couldn't get around that. I can't reveal too much about *Jaws III* right now, but I can tell you that it won't take place in the same town. I don't think that any of us would have considered doing the film if we had to use the same location. I think I'd scream if I ever heard Murray Hamilton complain again about how his tourist trade will be hurt if they close down the beach.

**TZ:** Although the *Jaws* concept sounds, at first, like something of a departure for you, it shares a theme found in your earlier work, much of which deals with ordinary, suburban-type people who are suddenly thrust into horrific or fantastic situations. I've been trying to find out just how close to this type *you* are, but not a hell of a lot seems to be known about you before you started writing.

**Matheson:** Maybe it's just that people think of me as four different writers: the *Twilight Zone* writer, the Edgar Allan Poe movie writer, the tv movie writer, and the novel and short story writer. I'm trying to get a stage play going now, so that should throw even more confusion into the ranks.

**TZ:** Were you always interested in writing?

**Matheson:** I guess I was. I had little poems and stories published in the *Brooklyn Eagle* when I was about

eight years old.

**TZ:** Were fantasy and science fiction your special interests?

**Matheson:** Fantasy, but not science fiction. I never even knew what science fiction was until I sold my first story, "Born of Man and Woman." The editor called me up and told me that since it had a mutation in it, it was science fiction. There was a big boom in the sf market at the time, so, being the practical person that I am, I did a lot of research into science fiction and started writing it. Inevitably, I wrote the same stories that every beginning science fiction writer does.

As a kid, I never read the *Oz* novels, comic books, or even *Weird Tales*. Instead, I'd read those enormous fairy tale volumes. Later on, I read all of Kenneth Roberts' books, which are each about twelve hundred pages long. Fantasy was what always appealed to me, though, and it's what I always wrote. I wrote a lot of stuff before I was published. I wrote a novel when I was sixteen which I never submitted. It dealt with a supposedly real event that proved the power of the mind, concerning some girl who fell down a flight of stairs, hit her head, and subsequently never grew older. She always looked sixteen.

**TZ:** Do you still have that book?

**Matheson:** Oh, it's probably in a box somewhere around here.

**TZ:** In all these years, you haven't taken it out to read?

**Matheson:** No. Once in a blue moon I'll read a short story or something that I wrote a long time ago, and very often I can't believe how bad it is. Once I've published something, I very rarely go back to it. I probably feel that I'd be wasting my time.

**TZ:** In a way, though, that could be your own kind of time travel.

**Matheson:** That's true. Any creative person, depending on how closely in touch he is with his feelings, reveals his psyche step by step in his work. It all comes out in the writing. Any psychologist could analyze the work I've published and get a very good psychogram of my personal development over the years. There are stories I've written that have been extremely successful—"Born of Man and Woman" has been anthologized endlessly—but I wouldn't write them today.

**TZ:** Even though you grew up in the *Weird Tales* era, it was never really an influence?



"I figured that if one vampire was scary, then a whole world full of vampires should really be scary." Vincent Price—protected by garlic and a crucifix—played an embattled survivor in *The Last Man on Earth*, based on Matheson's *I Am Legend*.

**Matheson:** No. I read fantasy, but it was usually books that I got out of the library that people have never even heard of. When I was in my teens, I read classic anthologies of writers like Bram Stoker, Ambrose Bierce, M. R. James, Arthur Machen...

**TZ:** Was there anything in your parents' background that might have destined you to become a fantasist?

**Matheson:** No. But then, I've always believed that what your interests become aren't solely the result of your environment. Both of my parents came from Norway. My father had been a merchant seaman, and then he installed tile floors. Although there were very talented people in my family, no one had ever thought of making a living from writing.

**TZ:** Did they think you a little bizarre for wanting a career as a writer?

**Matheson:** They never discouraged me, but they probably thought that it was just a cute hobby I had. They must have figured that eventually I'd grow up and get an honest job. Of course, I never have!

**TZ:** Is that one of the hazards of the writer's life: that no matter how hard the writing gets, the illusion remains that you're not doing real work?

**Matheson:** That's what happens to



actors, I think. A lot of them get hooked on drugs and booze because they don't think it's manly to cavort around playing pretend. Writing, though, has an honorable tradition. Still, it's true that no one in my family ever took me seriously until they saw my name on television. It wasn't the books or movies that made me legitimate to them, but seeing my name on tv in their own living rooms. It's like what Ray Bradbury said: that he didn't become legitimate until he was able to take home a copy of the *Saturday Evening Post* with a story of his in it.

**TZ:** Perhaps, in the fifties, television became the public's equivalent of the *Saturday Evening Post*.

**Matheson:** Sure. Charles Dickens would have been the greatest mini-series writer in the world. Lord, he would have been a zillionaire. •

**TZ:** When did you actually try to sell what you'd written?

**Matheson:** When I was twenty-three. It took me about three months to sell something. I suppose that once in a while, without any kind of practical approach, I had submitted stuff before, but it was after I got out of college that I began to seriously try to get myself published. In fact, I recall sending "Disappearing Act" to a reading agent, one of those places where you had to pay them to read your manuscript, and it was torn to pieces. They analyzed it as if it were a realistic story. I thought that they were absolutely crazy. A couple of years later, I sold "Disappearing Act" totally unrevised. It then became one of the first stories that Rod bought for *The Twilight Zone*, although his adaptation of it—"When the Sky Was Opened"—was a completely different story.

**TZ:** I guess that reading agent wound up in real estate.

**Matheson:** It would have been bad for the real estate business if he did.

**TZ:** When you started submitting stories, was it always with an eye toward becoming a full-time writer?

**Matheson:** Up until the time I got out of college, I guess I thought that I'd just do it as a kind of hobby. When I graduated, though, I figured I'd give it a shot. I decided to give myself a year or two to become successful at writing. After that, there was no turning back. I kept on telling myself, "I will make it." I never thought of the



"I don't think I ever believed that I'd be hired as a screenwriter. I always knew in the back of my mind that I'd have to have a novel that Hollywood would want to buy."

alternatives. I was able to keep at it because, at that point, I only had myself to worry about. I didn't get married until three years later, when I came out to California. In fact, I used the way I met my wife on the beach almost word for word as the first chapter of the first novel that I ever sold, *Someone Is Bleeding*, a mystery. There's also mention of it in *What Dreams May Come*.

**TZ:** Has your wife ever felt that she was just being used as source material, and that that's why you kept her around?

**Matheson:** No, but it's no accident that many of the women in my first stories were named Ruth. Like I said, you cannot take away your life from your writing, no matter how you try to disguise it. When I wrote *The Shrinking Man*, we were living in a little house on Long Island. I would go down to the cellar every day to write, and would make the cellar in the story exactly the same.

**TZ:** Are most of your novels, then, autobiographical?

**Matheson:** In a psychological sense, yes.

**TZ:** How about as to background characters and locale?

**Matheson:** Oh, sure. *I Am Legend* takes place in the house where we lived in Gardena, California.

**TZ:** After having done the mystery *Someone Is Bleeding*, why did you decide to write a fantasy novel like *I Am Legend*?

**Matheson:** When I came to California in 1951, I joined a group of writers called the Fictioneers. Almost all of them were writing mystery novels, so I imitated them. *I Am Legend* was a natural extension of what I had always

been doing. I got the idea for it when I was seventeen years old in Brooklyn and saw *Dracula*. I figured that if one vampire was scary, then a whole world full of vampires should really be scary.

**TZ:** *I Am Legend* is scary, all right, and it's also very grim. Did that reflect anything bad that was going on in your life at the time?

**Matheson:** There's nothing particular that I can recall, but people have presumed that I was paranoiac at the time. The book may have been affected by the pressures of supporting a wife and child from a profession that was still very vague to me. When we got married, I had only made about \$500 from some short stories.

**TZ:** During that time, while you were trying to make a success of writing, did you have another job?

**Matheson:** Yes, I was working at Douglas Aircraft, on a machine that cut out airplane parts. A lot of people in the entertainment industry worked there. Hiring all of those writers and out of work actors could have been the beginning of Douglas's troubles.

**TZ:** The character in *A Stir of Echoes* also worked at Douglas.

**Matheson:** *A Stir of Echoes*, like *I Am Legend*, took place in Gardena. I guess that's not such a good neighborhood!

**TZ:** Many critics have suggested that there are allegorical overtones in *I Am Legend*.

**Matheson:** I've never tried to write allegorically. The only time I ever considered that was in my novelette "Duel." Even there, I chickened out and backed off quickly. I just wound up calling the hero "Mann" and the truck driver "Keller." Generally I don't

think it's a good idea for a writer to try to be allegorical on purpose. Once you try to do that, the story usually winds up being very dull, although there are some writers who can pull it off.

**TZ:** After *I Am Legend*, you moved back to the East Coast. Was this because you'd been unable to crack the film industry?

**Matheson:** No. Occasionally my agent would get me called into a story conference, but I don't think I ever believed that I'd be hired as a screenwriter. I always knew in the back of my mind that I'd have to have a novel that Hollywood would want to buy—and with which I could get a screenwriting assignment—to wedge my way into the business. My family was just running out of money, so I went back east to work for my brother in his mail order business. I worked for him and wrote *The Shrinking Man* at the same time.

**TZ:** Where did the inspiration for *The Shrinking Man* come from?

**Matheson:** Back in California, I'd gone to a movie that had Ray Milland, Aldo Ray, and Jane Wyman in it. There was a scene in which Ray Milland was leaving Jane Wyman's house in a huff, and he accidentally put on Aldo Ray's hat, which went way down over his ears. It suddenly occurred to me, What would happen if a man put on his own hat and the same thing happened and the man realized that he was shrinking?

**TZ:** It's interesting that both *I Am Legend* and *The Shrinking Man* were inspired by films.

**Matheson:** Almost all of the ideas that I've had have come from bad films. I get *absorbed* by good movies, but when I'm watching a bad picture and my mind is drifting off, something in the film sometimes triggers my thought processes and I get an idea for a story. That isn't to say that *Dracula* was a bad movie, however.

**TZ:** The concept of a man growing constantly smaller had been used at least once before, in a science fiction story called "He Who Shrank," but your own treatment is a good deal more realistic.

**Matheson:** I can't write fantasy any other way. I can't do sword and sorcery or stories that take place in the thirty-fifth century. In a way, as a fantasy writer, I'm a mainstream writer. Once I've established the twist, I pro-

ceed almost in a non-fantasy manner.

**TZ:** Was *The Shrinking Man* a major publishing success?

**Matheson:** Yes. At the time, Gold Medal had never done science fiction. *I Am Legend* was their first, and *Shrinking Man* was the second. They both did very well. They were both published as paperbacks.

**TZ:** Did you realize, while you were writing *The Shrinking Man*, that it would be the vehicle that would take you to Hollywood?

**Matheson:** No. I was caught totally by surprise when its film rights were bought. It happened very quickly. In fact, the rights were bought before it was published. I realized, though, that I had to do the screenplay.

**TZ:** The novel starts off with Scott Carey already in the cellar battling the spider, and tells the story of his shrinking via flashbacks. Why did you decide, in the film, to tell the story chronologically?

**Matheson:** I had actually written the book, at first, in the same order. I don't know if I submitted it that way, but I realized that it didn't work. It didn't grab you. It took too long to get to the good stuff—Scott Carey in his miniature world of the cellar. Once I realized that, I made it so that the two stories were being told simultaneously.

**TZ:** Yet for the film, you went back to the linear form.

**Matheson:** It was hard enough for them to deal with that type of movie anyway. They wouldn't have listened to me if I told them to use the book's format. I mean, we were pre-Antonioni, with all of his flashbacks and time jumping all over the place.

**TZ:** There's intense, sexually oriented material in the novel, but it's missing in the film.

**Matheson:** For one thing, it would have made the picture too long. The producers wanted to get right down to the visual stuff as soon as possible; Carey's in the dollhouse in the first twenty or twenty-five minutes. Unfortunately, because of that, the human element in the film is puerile and inadequate. But as a first-time screenwriter, I was in no position to argue.

**TZ:** Aside from these problems, did you like the job that Jack Arnold did?

**Matheson:** Yes. After all, *The Incredible Shrinking Man* has become a classic. It has a good look to it.



"For a while it seemed to be working."

Matheson got the idea for the *Twilight Zone* episode "Nick of Time"—starring William Shatner and Patricia Breslin—from a real-life fortune-telling machine.

**TZ:** Since nowadays a film *could* explore the novel's more sophisticated themes, it must have been frustrating for you when you learned how Universal was going to treat the remake.

**Matheson:** When my agent called me and told me about the planned remake, I told him that I'd only be interested in it if they would go back to the structure of the original novel and really get into Scott Carey's human relationships. I felt silly for having said that when I found out that it was going to be a Lily Tomlin comedy!

**TZ:** Did you not want to be involved with it at that point?

**Matheson:** When John Landis was going to direct it, he was going to have a bunch of the local science fiction writers do cameos. I was going to play a pharmacist who gives the shrinking woman a prescription while she's standing on the gorilla's shoulder. Once Lily Tomlin joined it with her partner, Jane Wagner, nothing came of that idea.

**TZ:** But would you have wanted to write it as a comedy?

**Matheson:** It never occurred to me. But I would have loved doing it, because I enjoy writing comedy. Frankly, if they *had* hired me, I think I would have written a much funnier film.

**TZ:** You didn't like *The Incredible Shrinking Woman*?

**Matheson:** I thought it was terrible. It wasn't a bad idea to cast Lily Tomlin, because she's a great performer when she has good material. Unfortunately, with this film, she didn't. It doesn't bother me that they did it as a comedy, but my feeling is that if you're going to do something, do it right. Thankfully, once you've done the book, it doesn't matter if someone bastardizes your ideas. You always have the original novel.

**TZ:** Did you get any additional money for the remake?

**Matheson:** No. The contracts that the studios set up in the fifties tied up the rights to everything except your own children. I never got a penny out of it.

**TZ:** That doesn't seem fair, considering how much of the idea was really yours.

**Matheson:** It isn't the first case of injustice in Hollywood.

**TZ:** The original film version of *The Shrinking Man* must have opened a lot of doors for you. Where did you go from there?

**Matheson:** Well, not too many opportunities actually materialized. I wrote the film for Universal, and then wrote a sequel for them called *The Fantastic Shrinking Girl*. It had Scott Carey's wife finding out that she had also been infected by the radiation. She had her own shrinking adventures, and then went down into the submicroscopic world. She finally got together with Scott, and they had some more adventures. As I recall, they somehow grew back to normal at the end of the picture. I don't know why Universal never made *The Fantastic Shrinking Girl*, because the first one made so much money and they had all the sets still lying around.

After that, I did two or three versions of *Gulliver's Travels*. All of these scripts were done for Albert Zugsmith. He was great on adjectives. He put *Incredible* in *The Shrinking Man* and *Fantastic* in *The Shrinking Girl*. Then he went over to Metro [MGM], and I went with him. I did what started out as a sort of "true story" police study of a guy who would meet salesmen or soldiers, find out about their wives, and then, when the men were away, go to their apartments and rape their wives. It was a very interesting story, but it ended up



"The *Twilight Zone* allowed me to write interesting scripts and work with people that I liked. It was an awfully nice way to make a living."

as a terrible Beat Generation picture. I even fought for a co-credit on the movie, although I don't know why. I should have just let it go.

**TZ:** Early in your career, isn't it better to have a credit on a bad film than no credit at all?

**Matheson:** I'm not sure. At this point in my life, I wouldn't put my name on something like that. I'd put "Logan Swanson," my pen name, on it. Logan was my wife's mother's maiden name, and Swanson was the Americanized version of my mother's maiden name. He's written a lot of the worst dreck in the world.

**TZ:** Didn't you do the script for *The Last Man on Earth*, the film version of *I Am Legend*, under that name?

**Matheson:** Yes, Hammer brought me over to England in 1957 to write it. Then they said that it was too violent to get past the British censor.

**TZ:** That seems odd, since many of the films that Hammer was doing at the time were filled with violence.

**Matheson:** Maybe they told me that because they just didn't like my script and were being polite in their British fashion. The nice part of that trip was that it was fun to get to England. I was there for about a month and a half and spent a lot of time walking all over London.

After the Hammer experience, *Last Man* was sold to Robert Lippert, an independent producer over here. I revised my script to follow the book more closely, and it became much better. Lippert started talking about having Fritz Lang direct it, which began to get me all excited. Then we went from Fritz Lang to Sidney Salkow! Some guy whose name I forget re-wrote my script and thus occurred the

continued existence of "Logan Swanson." They made the film in Italy with Vincent Price, who I like very much, but who was all wrong for the lead role. Still, they shot it in black and white, which helped. It was also kind of weird-looking, because they were trying to pass off Italian neighborhoods as American suburbs. At any rate, it's certainly much closer to my book than *The Omega Man*.

**TZ:** Why weren't you involved with *The Omega Man*?

**Matheson:** No one asked me. By the time my agent heard about it, the script had already been finished.

**TZ:** When you went to see *The Omega Man*, were you able to view it as a film separate from your book?

**Matheson:** I didn't know, at the time, that they hadn't stuck closely to my book. I had to see the film itself before I realized that. It had no connection to *I Am Legend*, but that didn't bother me. I just didn't like it as a picture. The one good thing they had was Charlton Heston. He would have been perfect to play the Robert Neville of my novel. A young Clint Eastwood might have been good, too. When I was first writing *I Am Legend*, I envisioned Jack Palance in the role. Today, Roy Scheider would be good.

**TZ:** George Romero has said that when he first wrote *Night of the Living Dead*, he wrote it as a sixty-page treatment of *I Am Legend*.

**Matheson:** Oh, really?

**TZ:** Yes. And the ironic part is, you really couldn't make a faithful film version of your novel today, because people would think you were ripping off Romero.

**Matheson:** That's life. I really don't care about that; it's all in the past. I'm



only interested in what I'm going to do tomorrow.

**TZ:** Perhaps, nonetheless, you'll tell us a little about a period in your past that *we're* interested in: your association with Rod Serling and *The Twilight Zone*. How did you originally get together?

**Matheson:** In 1959, Chuck Beaumont and I got to see a special screening of *The Twilight Zone's* pilot episode, "Where Is Everybody?" Shortly afterward, we started working on scripts for the show. Rod had already adapted two of my short stories himself—"Disappearing Act" and "Third from the Sun."

**TZ:** Then Rod was already aware of you before the two of you got to go to that screening?

**Matheson:** That's right. What was nice was that not only did he like our material but that, after meeting us, he liked us personally.

**TZ:** Did you realize, from the start, that you might become something of a regular contributor?

**Matheson:** No, that never occurred to me, because I was writing for other television shows at the time. I never thought I might end up doing five or six more *Twilight Zones* or, as it turned out, fourteen. I just wrote each script as it came.

**TZ:** Did you find it difficult to adapt your stories into *The Twilight Zone's* television format?

**Matheson:** No, I never had that kind of trouble. There was always fertile ground there for any kind of idea that I might have. The only thing Rod had ever had to correct me on was that, at the start of my involvement with the show, I didn't know that I was supposed to write his narrations. I thought that he did all those himself.

Working on *The Twilight Zone* was fun. Rod always had the writer of an episode sit down at a table with the actors and director during rehearsals. We'd always be there to make whatever corrections had to be made and to help out wherever possible. In retrospect, I realize how rare that was—giving writers a chance to get involved in the production.

In fact, it was the only time this ever happened to me in television. I can remember sitting around the table with Lee Marvin discussing "Steel." After reading through the script, we all walked over to the set, and I recall Marvin trying to get himself emotion-

ally into the piece by making crowd noises, traffic sounds... It was great being there for the rehearsals and the shooting, and having input in the show.

**TZ:** Were you usually happy with the treatment of your stories?

**Matheson:** Looking back through the years, I'm more pleased. I'm so hard to satisfy, however, that, at the time, I was almost never completely happy. For example, I wasn't completely happy with the way "The Invaders" was filmed. Agnes Moorehead was wonderful, but the direction just dragged its feet. My version had many things going on that really kept the story going: much more involvement and incident. I also didn't want the viewers to catch more than a brief glimpse of the creatures until a very extended point in the story. I envisioned the creatures as really menacing. Once you saw them, those little figures wobbling around looked like windup dolls that you'd find on a street corner or in a cartoon. Even so, though, I wasn't too unhappy with the show.

On the other hand, I liked "Nick of Time" very much. That was Bill Shatner's first episode, and he was excellent. The girl who played his wife, Pat Breslin, was also wonderful.

**TZ:** I've always wondered if that show was inspired by something that you saw in real life.

**Matheson:** It was. My wife and I saw a fortune-telling machine like that in a coffee shop. I put a few pennies in it, and for a while it seemed to be working. As a matter of fact, Chuck Beaumont's son Chris bought me a machine like that in a nostalgia store. I have it sitting by my bar now. Neither that one nor the one in the coffee shop had the devil's head, but they both gave you those "yes/no" answers like the one in the show. The art department added the devil's head for effect. It was a nice touch.

**TZ:** Charles Beaumont is someone you've mentioned frequently. Was he a good friend of yours?

**Matheson:** Oh, yes.

**TZ:** How did that friendship start?

**Matheson:** When I came out here in 1951, Chuck came to see me in the furnished room I was living in at the time. I began to visit him and his wife where they lived in Hollywood, and the friendship grew from there. Chuck and I were extremely close, maybe



"... like windup dolls that you'd find on a street corner." Agnes Moorehead starred as a woman menaced by tiny "aliens" in Matheson's "The Invaders," perhaps his most famous *Twilight Zone* script.

because our careers were so similar. Our wives and children also became good friends. When both Chuck and his wife died, my wife and I acted as their children's foster parents for a while.

**TZ:** It must have been tragic for you when he died.

**Matheson:** It was awful. He was only thirty-seven, and he had Alzheimer's disease. He'd had spinal meningitis in his teens, and by the time I met him he already looked ill. He was always very, very thin, almost gaunt, and he suffered from headaches. Though he was above six feet in height, he only weighed around 140 pounds—and that was when he was *healthy*. It was terrible.

Bill Nolan told me the other day that Ray Bradbury has finally prevailed upon Bantam Books to get them to bring out a collection of Chuck's short stories, which I was very pleased to hear. I had tried for a long time to get some resales of his books, if only to get some money for his family. The publisher's logic for not reprinting them was that if the books were successful, their author wouldn't be able to put out any new material. Thankfully, Ray's gotten them to change their minds.

**TZ:** What kind of man was Rod Serling?



"Jacques was like Hitchcock..." Gladys Cooper played an elderly spinster victimized by a mysterious phone caller in Matheson's "Night Call," the *Twilight Zone* episode directed by horror film veteran Jacques Tourneur.

**Matheson:** Though Chuck and I and our wives had dinner at his house a few times, I really didn't see him that much socially, but he was always very, very nice and cordial—and also extremely helpful. Many times people would offer him jobs, and if he was too busy or didn't want to do them, he'd invariably tell them that they should contact Chuck or me.

**TZ:** Did you ever envy him his position as host of *The Twilight Zone*?

**Matheson:** No. Rod was the one running the show. He always seemed like the mentor. He had the wonderful success behind him of shows like *Requiem for a Heavyweight* and *Patterns*. Rod was the heavyweight.

**TZ:** Were you ever involved in his struggles with the network?

**Matheson:** No, but there was one incident I remember. Rod had this film society that Chuck and I belonged to. One night, we were at a screening at Rod's house while he was at a meeting. When he came back, he looked like death warmed over. He was incredibly worn out. I've always thought that his life was probably shortened by the pressures he dealt with on *The Twilight Zone*.

**TZ:** Did you yourself ever get any major network interference with your stories?

**Matheson:** It was always just the usual list of stuff that you couldn't do

in a show. I never ran into any major interference. The only thing that ever burned me up was that Rod could get "God" and "Dear God" into his scripts, and I never could!

**TZ:** It must have been nice, on "Night Call," to have an esteemed director like Jacques Tourneur helming it.

**Matheson:** It's interesting that you mention Jacques, because I was just thinking of him recently. He's always been one of my idols. I was seventeen when I saw *The Cat People*, one of his earlier efforts, which became a very germinal film for me. It was ridiculous that he wasn't working more during the early 1960s, but he was not an aggressive man. I had gotten him the job, thankfully, to direct *The Comedy of Terrors*, and Burt Granite, who was producing *Twilight Zone* in its fifth year, knew Jacques and hired him to direct "Night Call." I remember that everyone was worried that since Jacques was used to making movies where you have a lot of time to shoot a scene, he wouldn't be able to film the episode at the speed TV requires. They didn't have to worry, though, because Jacques was incredibly organized. He had every script page lined with charts, graphs, and notations. Jacques was like Hitchcock in that respect. I was told that he made "Night Call" quicker than any other director ever shot a *Twilight Zone*; he filmed it in

only twenty-eight hours. I was surprised that they didn't ask him back to do another one, but I guess that it was kind of late in the season, and that was our last year.

**TZ:** How did *Twilight Zone* compare to your experiences on similar shows? You did an episode of *Thriller*, didn't you?

**Matheson:** Yes, "The Return of Andrew Bentley." But I wasn't too happy with it. I like to do stories that involve couples. I envisioned Bill Shatner and Pat Breslin and the type of relationship that they had in "Nick of Time" as the leads in the story, so there was humor in my script. I've always felt—not that this was a great discovery of mine—that combining terror with humor at the appropriate moments is a very successful pattern to follow. Unfortunately, *Thriller*'s producers didn't want to do that. They just wanted their stories to all be heavy, *Weird Tales*, Lovecraft type things.

With *Twilight Zone*, on the other hand, whenever the producers—Buck or Herb or Bert—and Rod liked an idea of mine, I was free to write the show the way I wanted to.

**TZ:** At the time, did you have any inkling that *The Twilight Zone* would become the lasting success that it has?

**Matheson:** I doubt anybody thought that it would still be on TV more than twenty years later. Remember, when *The Twilight Zone* came on, there were really quite a few other good shows on television, so it wasn't entirely unique as far as quality goes. It also struggled year to year. I just felt, at the time, that *The Twilight Zone* was an awfully good show which allowed me to write interesting scripts and work with people that I liked. It was an awfully nice way to make a living. It's only when I look back and compare the show to what they have on television today that I realize how incredible it was. I guess that that's the reason why new generations keep on discovering it.

*Next month, in the concluding half of this TZ Interview, Richard Matheson describes his work on such celebrated projects as The Night Stalker, Burn, Witch, Burn, Duel, The Birds, The Legend of Hell House, and The Martian Chronicles, and talks about how he brought Edgar Allan Poe to the screen.* **17**

# Matheson in the Movies



ROBERT MARTIN SURVEYS THE MASTER FANTASIST'S THIRTY-YEAR CAREER—  
A CAREER FILLED WITH NIGHT STALKERS, RAVENS, AND SHRINKING MEN.

Screenwriting is a form that has attracted Richard Matheson from the earliest stage of his career. In 1951—just one year after his first short story was published—the twenty-five-year-old Matheson packed his bags and left for Hollywood, planning to get in on the ground floor of the nascent television industry. He was not immediately successful, but within a year of his return to the New York area, he started work on his celebrated fantasy novel *The Shrinking Man*. Published as a paperback original, it was exactly what Universal Pictures wanted as the next project for Jack Arnold, director of *It Came from Outer Space*, and they wanted it badly enough to accept Matheson's condition that he would sell them the book only if he could write the script. Filmed in 1957 as *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, it starred April Kent and Grant Williams (above, about to do battle with a spider).

With this sale behind him, Matheson had acquired the one indispensable item for a beginning screenwriter—a track record. On his return to California he renewed old

contacts, once more offering his services as a tv scriptwriter—with considerably greater success. Matheson's credit subsequently appeared on such diverse programs as *Wanted: Dead or Alive*, *Have Gun Will Travel*, *The Alfred Hitchcock Hour*, *The Bob Hope Chrysler Theater*, *Thriller*, *Star Trek*, *Night Gallery*, and, of course, *The Twilight Zone*.

Meanwhile, American International Pictures, after having had great success with the low-budget sf and horror films of young Roger Corman, had approved an increased budget for Corman's next project, an adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher." Perhaps because of his own expertise in Poe's chosen form, the uncanny tale, Matheson was hired as screenwriter. The film proved to be AIP's most commercial to that date, and many more followed, reteaming Matheson with Corman, Poe, and leading man Vincent Price. With later entries in the series, Corman and Matheson would be accused of mangling Poe. *House of Usher*, however, was as true to its source in letter



and in spirit as could ever be expected from a studio film, and Vincent Price gave a creditable performance in the role of the doomed Roderick. None of the Poe films that followed quite matched this one; the studio brass regarded Poe as a sure moneymaker, yet continued to depend on Corman to make the most of a minimal budget. Three more such films featured Matheson scripts before the author, out of boredom, demurred in favor of Charles Beaumont, who penned the screenplay for *Masque of the Red Death*.

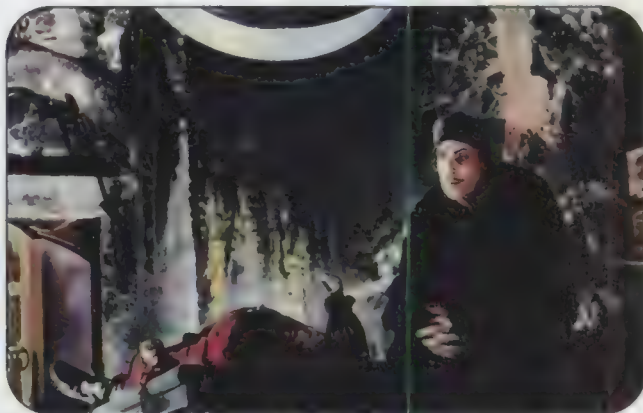
For *The Pit and the Pendulum*, faithful translation of Poe's work was patently impossible. Poe's story is placed entirely in the Pit and takes about twenty minutes to read; stretching the story to an hour and a half necessitated adding new characters and situations. Not much happens in the film, however, until we get to "the good stuff"—the razor-sharp pendulum that, as in the Poe original, slowly descends toward its victim's heart.

Thin material was not a problem with *Tales of Terror*, Matheson's third contribution to the series. This time an anthology format was used, with three cinematic sketches based upon four of Poe's stories. With the exception of the final segment, "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar"—with Basil Rathbone as a mesmerist who keeps the soul of Valdemar (Price) trapped in his dead body—wide liberties were taken with Poe's work, but solely in the interest of producing a more entertaining film. Particularly effective was "The Black Cat," based in part upon "The Cask of Amontillado." This segment offered one memorably comic scene in which Price, as a refined gentleman, and Peter Lorre, as a drunken lout, face each other off in a wine-tasting duel.

This scene pointed the way to Matheson's final contribution in the Poe cycle, *The Raven*. As a poem, "The Raven" offered quite a challenge to its cinematic adaptors, a challenge that was, in fact, resolved by simply tossing Poe out the window. The film opens respectfully enough as Dr. Craven (Price), brooding in his study over the loss of his beloved Lenore, is interrupted by the arrival of a raven. The bird soon proves to be the magical guise of Dr. Bedlo (Peter Lorre), who has come with a message—Lenore is not dead; she is merely held captive by the evil magician Dr. Scarabus (Boris Karloff). Through the scenes that follow, all three veteran actors display a marvelous flair for the comic, and the film culminates in a special-effects battle of the wizards.

Very much in the same style as *The Raven* was *The Comedy of Terrors*, often mistaken for part of Roger Corman's Poe series, but actually the work of longtime genre director Jacques Tourneur. The bullying Trumble (Price) and hapless Gillie (Lorre) are two undertakers with problems paying the rent. They decide to murder their Shakespeare-quoting landlord (Basil Rathbone), thus dissolving their debt while garnering a fee. The problem is that Rathbone, a cataleptic, won't stay in his coffin. At the same time, Price is anxious to solve his in-law problems by getting "father" (Karloff) to take his poisonous "medicine." Of course, the old man outlives everyone.

During the years that it took the Poe cycle to run its course, AIP released two other Matheson films, *Master of the World* (based on the Jules Verne novel and its precursor, *Robur the Conqueror*), with Price in the title role opposite a young Charles Bronson, and *Burn, Witch, Burn*,



Vincent Price as Nicholas, a Spanish nobleman convinced he's his own father—a ruthless Inquisitor—in *The Pit and the Pendulum*.

faithfully adapted from Fritz Leiber's *Conjure Wife* by Matheson and Charles Beaumont. The film version starred Peter Wyngarde as a young college teacher elated by the sudden advancement of his career, until he is shaken to learn that his wife, played by Janet Blair, attributes this good fortune to her secret practice of witchcraft. Leiber's novel makes this witchcraft believable—believable, in part, because the disbelief of the world-at-large is a major part of the story, a point that was not lost to the scriptwriters, nor to the film's director, Sidney Hayers.

In 1963 came the notorious made-in-Mexico production, *The Last Man on Earth*, based on Matheson's *I Am Legend*. Matheson ruefully admits writing the script, though the admission is always followed by the reminder that Robert Lippert, the producer who committed this atrocity, hired William Leicester to rewrite Matheson's work. The film does, in fact, follow the plot of *I Am Legend* very closely, and achieves a certain brooding texture that is very much in the spirit of the novel. But as the last survivor of a plague of vampirism that has turned the world's population into a horde of rampaging living dead, Vincent Price comes across as a morose whiner, not a survivor; the story moves at a snail's pace, and the film cannot conceal its subminimal budget. Even so, it offers more in the way of ideas—Matheson's ideas—than does *The Omega Man*, a later, big-budget adaptation of the same novel, with Charlton Heston, that widely departed from its source.

Matheson has also teamed up with Britain's Hammer Films on a couple of projects. The first was *Die! Die! My Darling*, a potboiler nearly as tawdry as its title, based on the novel *Nightmare* by Anne Blaisdell. Hammer at the time had developed a seeming fascination with psychotic murderers in the *Baby Jane* mold and turned out a whole slew of such films. Tallulah Bankhead, hamming ferociously as if she knew it was to be her last movie, played a crazed religious fanatic who blames her daughter-in-law (Stephanie Powers) for the death of her son.

More interesting is the movie known to buffs as "the last good Hammer," *The Devil's Bride*, adapted by Matheson from Dennis Wheatley's novel *The Devil Rides Out* and released in Great Britain under the latter title. The film pitted Charles Gray, as the seductively evil Mocate, against Christopher Lee (playing the good guy for once) as the Duc





A trio of terror-film veterans—Boris Karloff, Peter Lorre, and Vincent Price—were cast in the Corman-Matheson Poe send-up, *The Raven*.



The untapped comic talents of Vincent Price and Peter Lorre were put to maximum use in *The Comedy of Terrors*.



Charlton Heston starred (with Anthony Zerbe and Rosalind Cash) in *The Omega Man*, one of the three films inspired by Matheson's novel *I Am Legend*.



Charles Gray as Mocate, the ultra-smooth Satanist of *The Devil's Bride*, based on Dennis Wheatley's *The Devil Rides Out*.



Darren McGavin as the slightly threadbare news-hound Carl Kolchak, alias *The Night Stalker*.

de Richelieu. Complete with goat-foot god, this chilling depiction of modern Satanism was largely neglected when it was released here in 1968.

1971 saw the appearance of the tv movie *Duel*, adapted by Matheson from his own *Playboy* novelette and directed by Stephen Spielberg. In the film, Dennis Weaver played an ordinary fellow who becomes embroiled in a high-speed power struggle when, on a highway, he passes a road-hogging truck. In retaliation it passes him again, and the competition escalates into a battle to the death.

Matheson's next and most successful tv movie, *The Night Stalker*, was the first of several written for Dan Curtis, a producer best known at the time for the supernatural soap opera *Dark Shadows*. Curtis had acquired the rights to an unpublished novel called *The Kolchak Tapes*, and Matheson provided the tv adaptation. Darren McGavin played Carl Kolchak, a hard-boiled reporter for the *Las Vegas Daily News* who, while investigating a series of murders, learns that one victim's neck wounds—which seem to have been made by animal teeth—contain traces of human saliva. Only Kolchak has the imagination to realize that the murderer is, in fact, a vampire.

Upon its broadcast in January of 1972, *The Night Stalker* garnered the largest viewing audience of any tv movie to that date, and a sequel was soon under way. The second script, a Matheson original called *The Night Strangler*, found Kolchak down and out in Seattle, where he becomes involved in another series of grisly murders: each victim is dead from strangulation, the neck broken and bearing a residue of decomposing flesh, as if strangled by a walking corpse. The mystery leads Kolchak to a 300-year-old alchemist residing in "Old Seattle"—an underground labyrinth containing the remains of the town that burned in the Seattle fire of the last century. Matheson had been inspired to use the underground city as a setting a couple of years before, when he learned of its existence during a Seattle vacation.

*The Night Stalker* soon became a series, for which Matheson, in collaboration with William F. Nolan, wrote a third Kolchak script; it was never produced. Titled *The Night Walkers*, it pitted the intrepid news-hound against an evil ring that's replacing world leaders with robot counterparts—an idea that later turned up (innocently, no doubt) in *Futureworld*.



Matheson completed three more scripts that were produced by Curtis in 1973. Cloris Leachman starred in *Dying Room Only*, based on the Matheson story about a woman stopping at a roadside diner with her husband, who mysteriously disappears; the other patrons, however, protest that she arrived alone. *Scream of the Wolf*, with Clint Walker and Peter Graves, based on a story by David Case, is remarkable only in that it is a werewolf story without a werewolf. Matheson's next work for Curtis was an adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, starring Jack Palance in a more humane version of the inhuman Count.

In 1973, Matheson returned to theatrical films with *The Legend of Hell House*, based on his novel. Roddy MacDowell, Pamela Franklin, Clive Revill, and Gayle Hunnicutt starred as a group of psychic researchers determined to rid a mansion of an evil presence. As haunted houses go, this proved a pretty nasty one, but not as nasty as the book's. While it is an entertaining film, director John Hough seems inordinately fond of extreme close-ups, bizarre camera angles, and elaborately fluid camera movements that serve little purpose other than distraction.

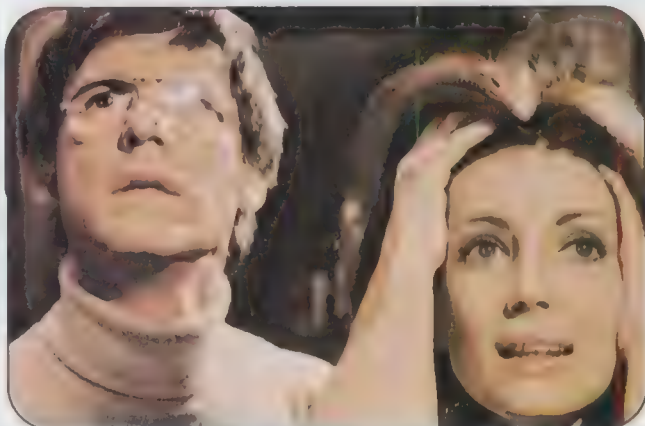
In 1974, Matheson adapted his short story "Trespass" as a tv movie, *The Stranger Within*. Barbara Eden portrayed a woman who learns that she is pregnant, despite the fact that her husband is sterile. The intruder slowly takes over her body and mind, adding new meanings to the phrase "alien invasion."

In 1975 and 1977, Matheson worked again with producer-director Dan Curtis, developing two pilot films for a series to be called *Dead of Night*. The first of these, *Trilogy of Terror*, was based on three different Matheson stories, the first two adapted by William Nolan and the third by Matheson: "Millicent and Therese" concerns two sisters, one an amoral bitch who plots her sibling's demise; "The Likeness of Julie" concerns a prim schoolteacher who is secretly a succubus; and the best of the lot, "Amelia," based on the Matheson story "Prey," is about a souvenir voodoo doll capable of murder. Karen Black handled all four leading roles.

The second pilot bore the title *Dead of Night* and consisted of three more tales, based on two stories by Matheson and one by Jack Finney; this time Matheson adapted all three. "No Such Thing as a Vampire" is a tale of misplaced fear, with Anjanette Comer as a comely victim; "Bobby" concerns a woman who uses magic to bring her dead son back to life; and "Second Chance," from the Finney story, concerns an antique car that transports its owner to the era of its manufacture.

Matheson's last tv movie for Curtis was *The Strange Possession of Mrs. Oliver*, directed by Gordon Hessler, with Karen Black in the title role. Mrs. Oliver is a bored housewife who takes on a daring new personality—not realizing that the woman she pretends to be really exists.

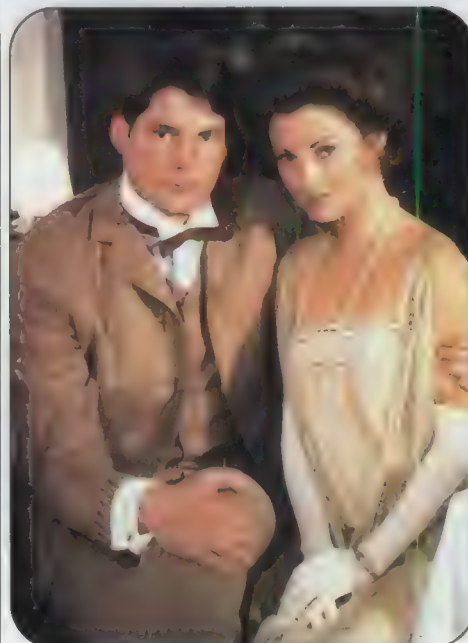
After two years of absence from the screen, Matheson returned to tv and the movies last year with two major projects. The first to appear was NBC's mini-series *The Martian Chronicles*, preserving much of the spirit that infused the Bradbury classic. Last fall saw the release of *Somewhere in Time*, based on Matheson's novel *Bid Time Return*, the story of a writer who wills himself back through time to pursue a hopeless love affair. Like *Chronicles*, the film was faithful to its source—signs that augur well for the future of fantasy on screen. **17**



Roddy MacDowell and Gayle Hunnicutt encounter forces from beyond the grave in *The Legend of Hell House*.



Captain Wilder (Rock Hudson) leads his men through an ancient alien city, in the Matheson adaptation of Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles*.



Christopher Reeve and Jane Seymour starred as lovers from two different worlds in *Somewhere in Time*.



# When The Cat's Away.

by John Alfred Taylor

## IT'S TIME TO WATCH OUT FOR THE OTHER ANIMALS!

**J**ean left at noon for the weekend, all the way to Philadelphia for the regional convention. She made sure he had plenty of food—a casserole to heat up, cold cuts and Weight Watchers dinners if he preferred—but for extra consolation Payne bought himself a case of dark Lowenbrau. The heavy, lingering flavor would help fill the emptiness, and with no Friday lecture to prepare he could make a night of it. When the cat's away...

Not that Jean minded his drinking, but she had nagged a bit since his last cardiac examination. He kept telling her a little alcohol was good for the

heart, and she kept agreeing—"A little, Payne, a little."

Time for supper, he reminded himself as the taffy-colored foam of his third bottle spilled over the rim of the mug. He sponged off the stainless steel drain-board and opened the refrigerator. Not the casserole—tuna and noodles was tuna and noodles, even tarted up with capers and basil. Not the expensive tv dinners, not the braunschweiger, salami, pastrami, pressed ham, certainly not pickle loaf. Payne wanted something Old World, something that went with the dark beer. Down there was half a loaf of pumpernick-



el, and in the door rack was a bottle of ready-made borscht. He put some into a saucepan to heat and made himself a cream cheese and pumpernickel sandwich.

When the borscht was hot, he poured it into his soup dish without bothering with a ladle, but it tasted too sweet. What did Jean add? Extra salt was no help, and finally he tipped the stuff down the drain; the sandwich would be enough.

Payne was at loose ends. He'd been putting off all sorts of things till this weekend, but the November twilight leaned in against the window, blind violet-gray. With just the kitchen light on, Payne felt like a bug in a bottle. Except the bottle was made of shadows, had no fixed surfaces.

There was always the article for *Labrys*—if only he'd refused when Stern asked him to review Broumas's book. Stern thought *Agrionia* was a breakthrough. Payne considered it pretentious nonsense—or worse: Broumas's chapter on the Eating of the God hinted at personal participation. Much more of this, and classical studies would have its own Carlos Castaneda.

But Payne didn't feel like writing. Nor reading either. Maybe there was something on television; he'd barely glanced at the schedule in the morning paper.

Game shows. Reruns of *M\*A\*S\*H*. *Hogan's Heroes*. *The Rockford Files*. Movies long forgotten, best forgotten.

But one of the New York channels had a title Payne thought he recognized. *She-Demon*. Had the distributors considered "Demoness" too polysyllabic for their audience? It couldn't be as difficult as the film itself, if Payne's guess was correct.

Yes, it had to be Karpowicz's last, judging from the thumbnail synopsis. He couldn't remember the original Polish title, though the film was almost legendary. Karpowicz had killed himself during the final edit; later, something unpleasant had happened to the female lead.

And the picture had been all but abandoned by the distributors. Before anyone noticed, it had been in and out of the drive-ins as second feature to an American exploitation film.

Midnight. Which meant being up till two or three. Even with no Friday classes, he'd better lay off the beer awhile. Payne went back to the kitchen, rinsed and refilled the percolator, plugged it in. What to do till midnight?

Might as well work on the review after all. When the coffee was ready, Payne took an oversize cup with his initials down to the basement study.

It was always disillusioning to reread a first draft, but these halting paragraphs! Not that he was wrong; Broumas was pernicious, twisting what documentation existed, disregarding any evidence that clashed with his thesis.

It was true that *Agrionia* meant "provocative to savagery," and that the festival had been celebrated with great savagery; Plutarch himself had testified that the priest of Dionysus had pursued the women devotees with a sword, killing those he caught.

Still, the brutality of the act was no proof of Broumas's contention—that it was ritual repayment for an equally savage ritual the night before, when the women had supposedly drawn lots and chosen one of their sons for victim. And there *was* the tale of the daughters of Minyas who, maddened by the god, had cast lots for which of their sons to kill . . . But that was myth, not evidence.

Broumas advanced his hypothesis of a secret nocturnal sacrifice, then argued as if this were fact. His assertion that such an atrocity had been practiced in classical times was equally unsupported, mere hypothesizing; his hints that a similar rite continued today were just vulgar grandstanding. (Or would it be better to say "Castanedaizing"? That was good, "Castanedaizing"—maybe he could use that.) Though human as well as animal sacrifice must have been involved before the cult was domesticated; he'd go along with Broumas there.

*Domesticated!* A word counter to the nature of Dionysus, as testified by his other names: epithets like "roaring," "liberator," "render of men," "wild hunter." Often the god was seen as a beast of prey with the shape of a panther or a lynx.

Broumas's book was all nonsense, pretentious theorizing, half-baked history of religion with a hint of personal experience—anthropological science fiction.

The weirdest thing about it was the personal inscription to Stern on the end paper: *May your reviewer accept this to his good health*. Now what had he meant by that, other than to mystify and impress?

Broumas needed taking down a peg or two, and Payne was just the man to do it. He had the title already: "Castanedaizing the Classics."

It was ten minutes to midnight when Payne looked at his watch again, and for a moment he felt like remaining at the typewriter; but the movie *was* the reason he'd stayed up so late.

Payne opened another beer before he went in to switch on the set with the sound down; credits for the last program were followed by a girl swirling her hair and describing the marvels of a shampoo in dumb show, then three more commercials and a station break. He turned up the sound as the film came on.

Long blond hair was shifting and rising behind the absurd English title; it took Payne a moment to see the hair as floating, partially submerged. Hoping to catch hints of the history of the film, he watched



the credits closely, and discovered the original title he'd been trying to remember: *Rusalka*. The Polish word was very like the Russian, both meaning a fatally seductive naiad.

Payne was fascinated from the first; despite the clumsy dubbing, the folk songs of the sound track were evocative, and he didn't know enough to fault Karpowicz's reconstruction of pagan Slavic ritual. Nobody did, he suspected.

The great sacrificial procession to the lake was brilliantly handled; even on the small screen, the beast-masked participants seemed more like remembered nightmare than actors in a film. For all the green leaves and sunlight, Payne found himself most reminded of the scene in *Alexander Nevsky* where grotesquely helmeted Teutonic knights prayed before battle.

When the chosen maiden turned at the water's edge and begged for mercy from the masked figures, and the camera closed in on the eyes of cat and badger and wolf and hawk and bull, the moment was painfully intense, even before the antlered mask that hid her lover turned blankly away.

Then the massed shapes crowded down and around. When they stood upright again, there was a white-draped figure drifting among its garlands, a pagan Ophelia.

That was it, Payne remembered. That was what had happened to the female lead. She had drowned.

In spite of more dark beer and the way the commercial breaks chopped the film into formless segments, Payne stayed awake till the end, watching as the drowned maiden came back as a rusalka, a destroying siren in the moonlight. As each of her murderers succumbed, the camera cut back to his mask hanging on its peg: her ex-lover's roebuck visage, the wolf, the hawk, the bull, the badger, the cat.

Payne turned the set off and went up to bed; yet after the light was out, animal snouts and eyes continued to thrust themselves forward in hypnogogic imagery. Although he opened his eyes to the

dark in hopes of driving them away, the beast faces came back, massing and crowding—lions, lynxes, tigers, and leopards laughing, snarling . . .

He woke late, with blocked sinuses and a foul taste in his mouth, his stomach sour. What had he been doing last night, other than drinking too much beer? Oh, yes, the movie, Payne remembered, the movie with all the animals.

That was the trouble with no Friday classes to teach: Thursday night you drank like it was Friday.

There was one last antacid in the bathroom, and Payne forced himself to wait till it was fully dissolved before downing it. The sound of its fizzing mingled with the drizzle outside. Thank God there was plenty of orange juice in the refrigerator; if only he'd had the sense to drink some before he'd gone to bed last night.

All he wanted was a soft-boiled egg. Afterward Payne read the headlines: a three-car crash on I-79, the marionette show of politics, Ann Landers advising a wife whose husband wore a black-lace garter belt. What was that line from Robinson Jeffers? *All will be worse confounded soon*. Next door the haystack-colored tom was yowling to be let in.

Toward eleven the drizzle stopped, the backyard swam in the mist: sparse orange leaves on the girders of the pin oak, saffron-green grass between bruises of unraked leaves.

What to do with himself? Go on with the review, he decided after he'd had a hair of the dog with his pastrami and cucumber sandwich. A promise was a promise, especially to Stern.

Payne stopped on the basement stairs. What was that smell? It made him think of the zoo, of the big cats . . . He sniffed again. The odor was gone, or had it ever been? Blocked sinuses made the nose untrustworthy.

When Payne turned on the desk lamp, he noticed that he'd left Broumas's book opened at the end papers. The inscription was still a puzzler. *May your reviewer accept this to his good health*. Crazy.

No point in thinking about it. He pulled the sheet in the typewriter free to read his last few sentences. They didn't make much sense; good thing he'd quit when he had.

Payne sat down, inserted a fresh sheet, started the paragraph again, eager to show up Broumas for the charlatan he was. Writing as if Dionysus existed, was still worshipped! The present tense was proper in the fifth century B.C., but in the twentieth century? Payne struck the keys with renewed vigor, determined that reason would prevail.

Professor Broumas even falls back on the long-outdated thesis that *The Bacchae* demonstrates Euripides' deathbed conversion to the Dionysian cult,

insisting that the jealous god's victory at the end of the play, childish and amoral though it is, proves that Euripides ended believing in the Olympian system. This is not only nonsense, but selective misreading of the text; *Hippolytus* ends with the protagonist destroyed by the rival claims of Artemis and Aphrodite, but no one claims that Euripides believes in these divine personages. The reader accepts them as representations of human instinctive drives, rival passions. And so it is with the tragedian's Dionysus . . .

Payne looked up. What was that tapping? A bare finger of wisteria at the ground-level window was all. Weak as the late sunlight was, the walls crawled with blue vines of afterimage.

Time for a beer.

Payne saw it the moment he came back down, stopping so suddenly that his beer slopped on the rag rug by the desk. Broumas's book was open to the inscribed flyleaf again.

Silly to let it shake him. He'd merely forgotten looking at the inscription one more time. But his next paragraph came out haltingly; the momentum of his argument was gone.

Time to quit for a while. Before he went upstairs, Payne closed Broumas's book and set his brass frog paperweight on it. This time he'd make sure.

On his next trip to the refrigerator he was surprised to see how little beer was left; that whole shelf had been stacked full. But now there were only one, two, three—he counted them twice—only seven left. And it was Friday afternoon. He needed another case to last the weekend. Why not get it now, rather than have to rush tomorrow?

The sky had turned overcast; the sodium-vapor lamps were already on in the shopping center lot, though there was still daylight enough to make their fierce pinks look small and lost.

It was hard to think of going home to an empty house—even with the new case of dark in his trunk—and harder to think of heating something up. Payne drove to McDonald's, wolfed down a Big Mac and two orders of fries under the fluorescent lights.

An hour later he was still belching, though the Lowenbrau helped some. Time to get back to work.

There was something at the foot of the basement stairs. The brass frog paperweight. Payne stared numbly for a moment before turning toward the desk, already knowing what he would see.

Yes.

Again Broumas's book was open to the inscribed flyleaf.

Saturday was bright and sunny, and Payne felt *finé* except for his stomach.

There were no antacids in the bathroom; he remembered using the last yesterday morning.

Bacon and eggs helped some, but Payne kept tasting the eggs afterward. Something else kept trying to rise to consciousness . . .

The brass frog. Last night he'd actually thought something had moved it and opened the cover of Broumas's book. Might as well get something to settle his stomach. Too bad there was nothing to settle his mind. A dose of common sense, maybe.

As long as he had to drive downtown, he might as well see if he needed anything else. Payne opened the refrigerator. Was there enough orange juice? He reached in to shake the carton, in the process tipping the wine vinegar, which knocked off a bottle of Lowenbrau. He grabbed for it, but too late; bursting on the floor, the dark beer foamed across the pale tiles. He swept up the glass, put down paper towels to soak up the wetness, scrubbed with more till the floor was no longer sticky. Even after he'd rewashed his hands, the smell lingered when he grasped the steering wheel.

On the way, Payne felt a tightness in his left side. Just his pyloric valve, nerves from driving with a hangover. A beer would help that, when he got back.

He parked in the town lot and cut through the alley to Main Street. Turning toward the drugstore, he stared, frozen. Across the street stood a huge rabbit—no, a person in a rabbit costume, holding a cardboard cylinder with a slot for contributions in the lid. Collecting for some cause or charity, he realized. Nothing to be afraid of. But just for a moment, Main Street had seemed like Thursday's movie.

Why was it so hard to breathe?

Up at the corner a man-sized rooster and a lion were talking to a black man in a wide-brimmed hat. Give to the *daimon* of your choice.

"Mister—"

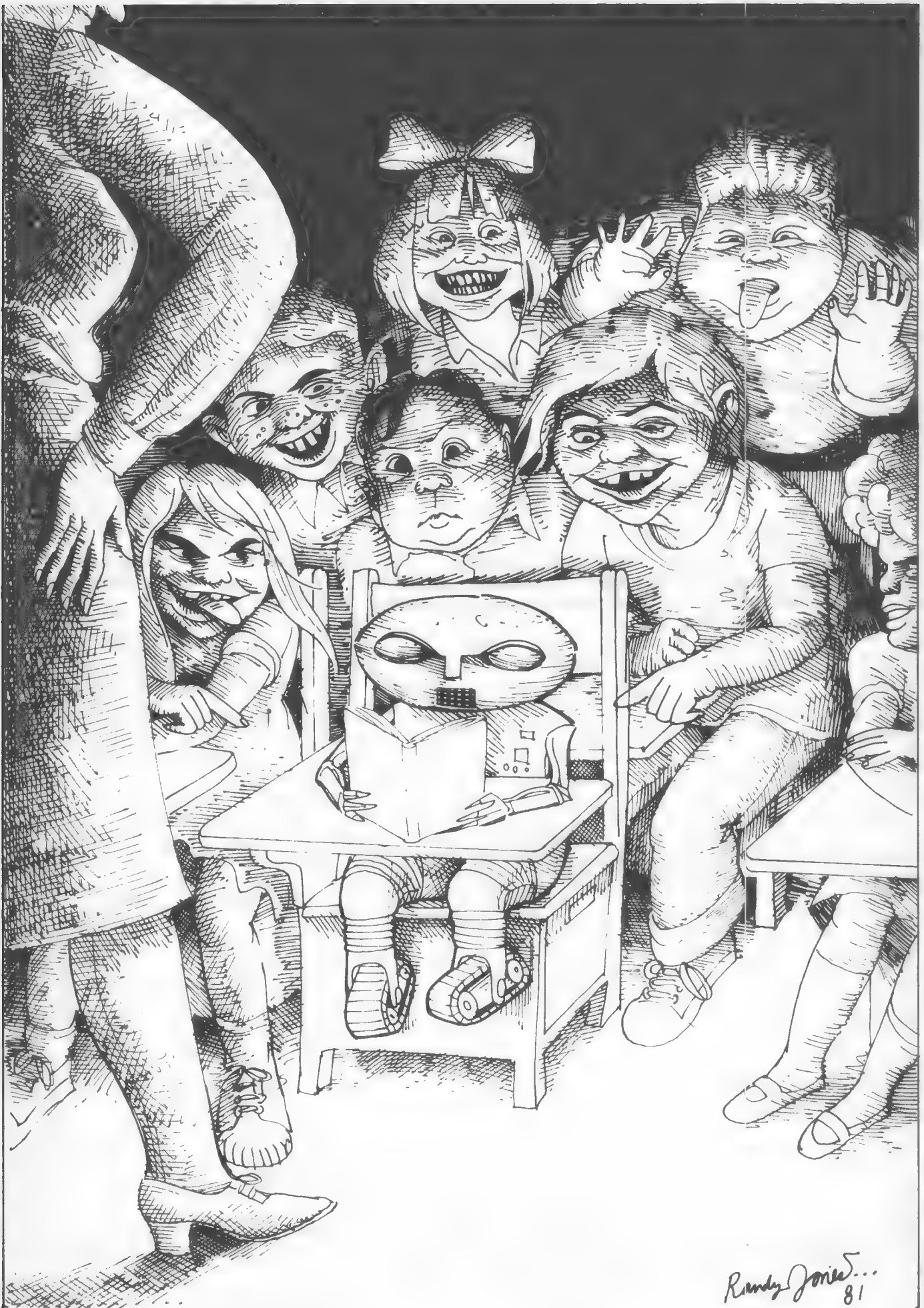
The voice was right next to him, under the darkness of the drugstore entrance. Reaching for him, a leopard, round yellow eyes staring over whiskers!

Pain exploded in his left side, rising up like a dark surf. As he bent on himself, he saw what was in the leopard's hand, the white shape of cardboard and, on it, the symbol of some cause, a red valentine heart . . .

His heart. The man in the leopard suit was asking for his heart. Darkness had Payne in its grip, was squeezing—

Leaning over him were the leopard and the rabbit and Raggedy Ann, her mouth frozen, red spots standing out on white cheeks under red yarn hair. The leopard-man was reaching down with his paw . . .

It was more like being torn. Payne tried to scream as darkness stretched his mouth wide, forced its way in. 17





# Roderick Goes to School

by John Sladek

IN THIS EXCERPT FROM *RODERICK, OR, THE EDUCATION OF A YOUNG MACHINE*, OUR PINT-SIZED ROBOT HERO, RAISED ON TV AND ADOPTED BY HUMAN PARENTS, PREPARES TO TAKE ON THE AMERICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM.

**M**iss Borden had tan hair exactly matching her tan pants suit, and watery blue eyes exactly matching the scarf at her throat. A chain ran from the bow of her glasses to the back of her neck (to the knob of tan hair), and it exactly matched the chain running from her belt to a bunch of keys. He had never seen such a neatly matched-up person; he stared while she selected a key and matched it to the door marked with her name: ELIZABETH BORDEN PRINC—

"Don't dawdle," she said. Princess?

"Don't be shy, Roderick." Ma took his hand and led him into the business room.

"Yes, I can see he'll cause—*have* special prob-

lems, Mrs. Wood. The handicapped and the disadvantaged are so often—but never mind, we'll manage somehow. Now where have I put those forms?"

"Handicapped? Well no, not exactly, he's—"

"Of course *you* don't think of him as abnormal, glad to see that, admirable the way you parents—now let's see, was it 77913 or 77923?—Yes, I always feel it's best to treat them as normal, healthy children and just let them find their own level, sink or sw—find their own level. Achievementwise. After all, isn't that pretty much the basis of our democratic... of course it is, and I'm sure little Robert will fit in just fine..."

"Roderick. His name is—"

George's pimples were brighter as he drew out a green form and began writing. He made no attempt to hide the words from Roderick: "Suspicious, poss. schiz. tendencies coupled with extreme identity crisis. This boy is severely handicapped, and consequently indulges in vivid fantasies of violence, sex, crime . . ."

"At the same time it's best to find a way of keying him in, don't you agree? Relating him to the system, here it is, 77913, just a few routine questions I have to ask—"

"You mean how well does he read and write, things like that?"

"Yes, um, but not exactly. We generally like to let reading and writing find their own lev—shall we begin?" She fiddled with a brooch and suddenly unreeling another gold chain with a tiny ballpoint pen at the end. Her left hand ironed the pink form ready. "Has he any juvenile record?"

"You mean criminal—why heavens no."

"Good, good. Any peculiar illnesses? Aside from his obvious handicap, that is."

Ma cleared her throat. "Miss Borden, maybe I haven't explained things too well. Roderick is—"

Miss Borden held up a hand. "Don't mean to rush you, but I've got a meeting with the school security personnel in a few minutes, suppose we just run right through these first and then after we can clear up any little discrep—*Oh, of course!* You're worried about giving out informa—oh, but let me assure you this is strictly confidential, here, here's a list of the agencies we're legally entitled to a data-share with, see for yourself, there's nothing to worry about."

She handed Ma a sheet of paper printed on both sides with names ranging from the Nebraska Welfare Investigation Bureau to the Presidential Committee on Population Control. "Okay, no history of illness then, how about chemotherapy?"

"Chemo what?"

"Medication, what kinds of medication will little Rodney require and how often? Tranquilizers, anti-depressants, enkephalides—"

"Well, none. Nothing."

After a moment's hesitation, Miss Borden marked a box. "Now we're getting somewhere. Has he been in analysis? If so, for how long and which therapeutic method? No? Fine. How about his training. Pottywise, I mean."

"He doesn't need—no trouble that way."

"Good, fine. Now for some details. How often does he have tantrums, Mrs. Wood?"

"Never."

The pen poised. "There's no place on the form for 'never,' Mrs. Wood. *All* children have tantrums. I'll tick 'seldom' if you like, but I wish you'd try answering these questions a little more frankly. Now, would you call him a hyperactive child?"

"I'm not even sure I know what that m—"

"Okay, then, he's not. Epileptic fits? No? Screaming? No? Excellent. Aggression—does he get into fights with other kids a lot? Good. Ever started a fire? Maimed another child? Fine. Now is he what you might call introverted—moody? I imagine so, being handi—disadvantaged like that, better put Yes. Suicide attempts? None? Fine. Is he sexually advanced for his age? No? That seems to cover the basics. Think we'll exempt him from sports for the time being, don't you?"

Miss Borden asked dozens of questions about the whereabouts of Mr. Wood, family insurance plans, earnings-related benefits, history of color-blindness and left-handedness, whether any grandparent was syphilitic or tubercular or a giant.

"Fine, now I'll just have my secretary key this into our data terminal and we'll be ready for some tests. Might as well go home now, Mrs. Wood, this could take the rest of the day. We'll call you."

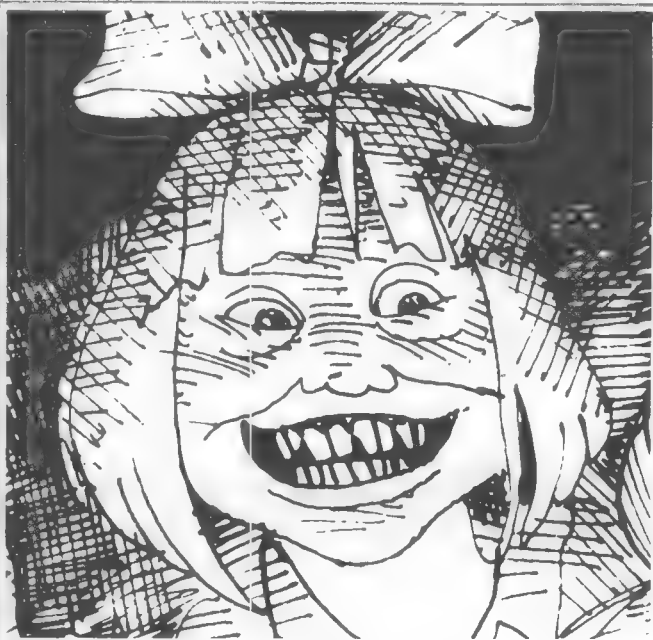
Roderick was whisked away by Miss Borden to another business room, where a kindly-looking man looked at him over his glasses.

"The, er, Wood boy is it? I'm Dr. Welby, heh heh, don't be nervous, boy, been a family doctor to your Ma and Pa for a good many years now, good many years." He stood Roderick up on his desk and applied a stethoscope here and there. "Heart seems fine, yes, I'd say—" He looked at his watch. "I'd say we can give you a clean bill of health, Roger." Dr. Welby stepped to the door. "Over to you, George. Kid's clean, I'll fill out the form later only just on my way to see Bangfield about that lakeside property thing . . ."

"Check." A young man in white came in, lifted Roderick down to a chair, and said, "How are ya, Roger?"

"Fine. I've got a clean bill." He noticed that Mr. George had lots of wiry black hair and red pimples. "Only I like to be called Roderick."

"Oh?" George stared at him. "Now why is that?"



"Because it's my name."

"Is it? Okay, *Roderick*, now don't let this white coat make you nervous, we're just here to play a few games. You like games, *Roderick*?"

"Yes." But if the man didn't want to make someone nervous with his white coat, why did he wear it?

"Okay, now I'm going to show you some pictures, and—funny pictures—and I want you to tell me what you see."

"Is that the game?"

"Yes, now what is this one?"

It was tricky, all right. The picture was nothing but a double blob, nothing like anything. Side-ways it might be a cloud, reflected in a lake.

"I don't see anything much. A cloud?"

"Yes, and now this one."

"A different kind of cloud with little wisps sticking out."

"And this?"

"A cloud with—"

"Okay, that's enough. Now try these pictures. Look at each one and tell me a little story about it. Ready?"

He showed *Roderick* a picture of a young woman weeping, while an older woman stood behind her.

"What's the story here, *Roderick*?"

"What, any story?"

"Sure, whatever you like."

"I guess the young woman is crying because she's just learned that her father swindled the bank he works at out of a million dollars, so the bank's going to fold and everybody'll lose their savings. That means she can't marry the hero because he's the sheriff and has to arrest her father. She can't cry in front of her mother here because she has a weak heart and might fall dead any minute. See, that's why the father embezzled the money for a special heart operation, when they catch him he says, 'I'm glad it's over,' and meanwhile the president of the bank, his son, is fooling around and gets locked in the safe, and this sheriff who used to be a famous safecracker only

nobody knows it, has to get the kid out and time's running out, when he does it he has to resign as sheriff because everybody knows—"

"Yeah, okay, that's enough. Now—"

"But just let me finish, he has to resign but the bank president gives him a million for saving the kid's life, and now that he's not sheriff he can give it to the girl's father to pay back all the little invest—"

"Yeah, okay, I get it, now try this one."

A bakery truck was turned over on its side, loaves of bread spilling out of it.

"A guy was delivering nitroglycerin to this place where they had to blast open a mine and rescue these miners, they've been trapped a week and time's running out."

"Listen, you're not *trying*, Roger, I mean *Roderick*. These old movie plots—"

"But listen, they put the nitro inside loaves of bread to keep it from getting shook up and—only the truck gets a blowout on a mountainside and the brakes go, these gangsters went and pinched the brake lines, the driver's got this crippled sister, she's in love with one of the gangsters, only—"

George showed *Roderick* two glasses, one short and squat, the other tall and thin. First he poured the short one full of orangeade.

"See how much we have? Let's mark it on the glass." He marked the level with a crayon. "Now we'll pour it in this other glass." He poured from the short into the tall glass and again marked the level. "See, it's way up here. Now. Do we have more orangeade? Or the same?"

After hesitating, *Roderick* said, "Less."

"No, I mean now, in this big tall glass. Do we have more here than we did in the short glass? Or the same?"

"Less."

"Look, it can't be less, Roger, *try*. How can it be less?"

"Well..." *Roderick* picked up the empty short glass and tipped it up. A single orange drop gathered at the rim and fell to the desk blotter. "That much less, anyhow."

George's pimples were brighter as he drew out a green form and began writing. He made no attempt to hide the words from *Roderick*, who was not yet scheduled to have a reading age.

*Roderick* read: "Suspicious, poss. schiz. tendencies coupled with extreme identity crisis. This boy is severely handicapped, and consequently indulges in vivid fantasies of violence, sex, crime, with recurring claustrophobic imagery. Overachiever, poss., with high IQ but poor grasp of abstract reasoning. Obvious resentment of authority, the classical overachievement syndrome. When asked, 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' he replied, 'Nothing.'"



**T**he screams from the playground could barely be heard in the teachers' common-room, where a digital clock silently wiped away a few last minutes. Miss Borden stood, clipboard in hand, ready to inspect her troops. No one seemed to feel much like talking: they puffed hungrily at cigarettes, or leafed through tattered copies of *Educationalist Today*, or simply closed their eyes and pretended to doze.

"We have a few minutes — any questions?"

She looked first to young Ms. Beek, who sat brushing her hair with long, deliberate strokes. Last year Ms. Beek had taken a sabbatical from Newer Public School, spent in a psychiatric hospital in Omaha. At least the trip had been good for her hair, now longer and browner and lovelier than ever. And the mind beneath its roots? Fully restored — or anyway, full of soothing drugs. Even if they made her quiet and withdrawn, they kept her even-tempered,

and wasn't that the main thing? She'd soon be back in the swim.

Mr. Goun, a pale, humorless young man with a glassy stare, sat reading a book. His red moustache moved as though in prayer, and his finger traced the lines across the page. Miss Borden leaned over his shoulder.

"Poetry, Bill?"

He looked up. "Educational psychology. Just, er, brushing up."

"I understand. Not easy to move from seminars in the ivory tower to the, well, vigorous give and take of the grade school classroom, I'll bet."

He nodded. "Interesting theory here, about utilizing the catalyzation potential of the classroom situation in the microassessment of —"

"Mmm, yes, sounds great." She passed on quickly to Mr. Fest, or as he preferred to be called, Captain Fest. He stood at the window surveying the playground through a pair of binoculars.

"Still keeping tabs on the troublemakers, Captain?"

He gave her a thumbs-up sign without looking around. "They needn't think they're getting away with anything out there, by golly. I know every face and every name. I know what they're up to even before they do. The day will come. The day will come." He tapped his gray crewcut. "Fest never forgets."

"Fine, fine." She moved on to Mrs. Dorano, the oldest member of the staff by some years. Mrs. Dorano was large, shapeless, motherly-looking, and absolutely in charge of the second grade. She sat in "her" chair nearest the door, knitting and frowning.

"Any questions, Mrs. Dorano?"

"Goodness me, no. Why, my sweet little angel-puddings are just about always as good as good can be. If any one has *questions* or *problems* around here, it's only because *they don't understand children*. I do understand *my* kiddies."

"No doubt."

"If only we could keep them innocent! But no, the world of grown-ups is lurking around every corner, waiting to pounce on my wee people and start corrupting them!"

"Oh yes?" Miss Borden checked her watch.

"Yes indeed." Mrs. Dorano slipped a book from her knitting bag and held it up. "Do you know, I found this hideous thing in the school library! The school library! Luckily I managed to confiscate it before some tiny hand fetched it down from the shelf, some clear little eye chanced to —"

"But this, this is just one of our standard texts for the sex education class."

"Exactly. *Dirt* education. For tender babes who never had a naughty thought in their innocent little noodles!"

"But many of the parents have asked —"



"For this corruption? I can't believe it and I won't believe it. You can call me an old-fashioned grumpy cross-patch if you like, but someone has to stand up and protect the little ones. Why, this book has pictures of unborn babies—right inside the you-know-what!"

One of the younger teachers giggled nervously. A mistake. Mrs. Dorano raised her voice. "Oh, you may snigger! The world is full of sniggers, wicked grown-ups who laugh at innocence, who want to pull it down and soil it."

"Mrs. Dorano." The principal removed her glasses. "I'm sure you have a point there. Why don't you take it up at the next PTA meeting and—"

"OK, I will, don't worry." Mrs. Dorano gave them all a motherly smile. "The PTA, certainly. And also the Newer Decency Society."

Miss Borden turned away quickly. "How's it going on the playground, Captain?"

"Not much action. Few kids kicking around some kind of toy tank there or something. If that's school equipment, I can promise them *they'll* be sorry."

"Toy—My God, that's the new pupil, the Wood boy! Where's Ogilvy, why isn't he out there stopping it?" She rushed out, her head filled with printing-presses, a blur of headlines:

CRIPPLED BOY BEATEN, GANG KILLS CRIPPLED BOY AT NEWER SCHOOL, PARENTS TO SUE . . .

Threading the maze of corridors, she found Ogilvy by the door. He was kneeling, making a few adjustments to his shin-guards.

"Some security guard!" she shouted. "They're beating the life out of a crippled kid out there. Let's go!"

"Can't be everywhere at once," he whined behind her. "I was just looking at the busted lock on the a-v room."

She stopped, halfway out of the door. "What? Not again?"

"Yup. Ripped off the stereo, tv camera, vid-recorder—the works."

This was serious, a bad blow to the budget. For a moment, Miss Borden almost forgot where she was going.

Roderick learned one thing right away: he was different-looking. Up to now, he'd never thought much about his appearance. Ma and Pa and the other grown-ups didn't seem to mind. But as soon as he appeared on the playground, bigger kids started shoving him.

"Hello," he said, hoping the shoves were accidental.

"Get that," said a tall, red-haired boy with missing front teeth. "He talks! Hey you, freaky, what's your name?"

"Roderick. What's yours?"

"Roderick, what kinda name is that? Hahahaha, it sounds like prick!"

The others doubled over at that one. The conversation turned to names, as, shove by shove, they backed Roderick against a wall. The tall boy, whom the others addressed as Chauncey, favored the name "Freaky-prick"; others suggested "Pricky-freak," "Pricky-dick," etc., etc.

"Roderick, hahahaha," said one of the smaller boys. "It sounds like poopy-pants!" He and another kid started wrestling and moved out of sight.

"Freaky," said Chauncey again, moving closer. "Why you wearing a iron suit, huh? Think you're tough or someping?"

"No, well, I just—"

"Shaddap. You ain't so tough, I bet, without that iron suit. Why don't you take it off, huh? Huh?"

"I can't."

"'I can't,' he says. S'pose I take it off you, huh? I could use a iron suit like that, s'pose I just take it?"

"He might die, stupid," said a kid in a blue track-suit. "It's like a iron lung, ain't that right?"

"Shaddap." Chauncey grabbed Roderick's arm and twisted; it turned easily in his grasp. "Shit, you ain't so tough. Bet I could, bet I could take you apart."

"Get him, Chauncey."

"Yeah, get him."

Chauncey hit Roderick hard where his stomach might have been and jumped back shaking his hand: "Owww, Chrise, he's solid steel!"

"My old man's got a stainless steel plate in his head," someone was saying, but just then someone grabbed Roderick by the head and pulled him over, and feet were kicking at him from every side.

The robot saw no point in trying to get up; he simply lay there, rolling and spinning under the barrage of tennis shoes. After a while the kicking stopped, and someone helped him to get up. It was Chauncey.

"You wanna be friends?"

"Okay, sure."

"Okay then, Rick, you got, listen, you got any lunch money?"

"No, what's that, lunch money? You mean they pay you to eat lunch or—"

"Don't be a smart-ass with me, I'll, I'll ionize ya. Now you listen and listen good."

All at once Roderick realized: Chauncey was a villain. Villains invariably told people to listen good. Or else.

"Listen good, I'll let you off this time, only tomorrow you bring a dollar. Or else."

"Or else what?"

"Or else we kick your ass, smart-ass."

One or two kids in the back had been infected: robot imitations went the rounds; someone asked permission to take Roderick apart to see if he had a heart; someone else declared her own heart had been removed at the hospital.

A bell rang. Roderick dusted himself off and looked over the scratches in his new paint job. Pa had painted him especially for school; he wouldn't like this. Chauncey gave him a last kick that resounded through his innards and left a dent, then ran off after the other kids. They all seemed to be heading for the building, so Roderick tagged along.

Mrs. Dorano had just finished calling the roll, checking each name against one of her magnetic cards, when the door opened and the security man came in trundling Roderick.

"I caught this kid sneaking around the hall," he said. "Yours?"

She consulted a lone card. "This must be little, er, little Roger. The Wood boy."

Someone piped, "Hahaha, looks like a steel boy to me."

Unsmiling, she waited until the uproar settled. "Naughty. We don't make fun of crippled people, do we, boys and girls?"

"No, Mrs. Dorano."

"Do we, Billy?"

"No, Mrs. Dorano."

"All right, then. Thank you, Mr. Ogilvy."

The guard shuffled out of the room, his shin-pads clacking together as he muttered, "... vandalizers ... burglarizers ..."

"Now then, Roger, you sit right here in front next to, that's right, between Chauncey and Jill, now I see by your card here you haven't been to school before—illness, I guess, and that means you may have just a teeny bit of trouble catching up, so you just follow along for now, watch Chaunc—watch Jill and just more or less do what she—anyway, now we're going to pledge allegiance. Everybody up, up, up."

"What's pledge allegiancing?"

"Hahahaha." Chauncey aimed a kick at him.

"He don't even know—"

"That's enough!"

"Yeah, but he don't even—"

"Chauncey, be quiet. Roger dear, haven't you ever pledged allegiance to the pretty flag? No? Well, just take your right hand—"

"Hahahaha, he ain't got no hand He's got—"

"Put your hand, of course he's got lovely artificial hands, put your hand over your heart—"

"I haven't got a heart either," Roderick said. Jill gasped.

"And say—"

"Missus Dorano, Missus Dorano!" Jill jumped up and down, pointing to him. "He says he ain't got a heart, how can he pledge allegiance without a heart, I mean it's *illegal*."

"Of course little Roger's got a heart, dumping. Everybody's got a heart. Roger, I hope you're not going to be a little fibber, don't you want to be a good American? Roger?"

"My name's Roderick."

"More fibs, tch tch tch, Roger it says on your card and Roger you are—the computer never lies."

"I wanta go home now."

Chauncey grinned slowly. "Yeah, let's all go home, come on."

"CHAUNCEY, SIT DOWN AND SHUT UP. Roger, you can't go home, now stop fibbing and disrupting the class with your no hand and no heart and no name—"

"My name is Roderick and I'm a robot, so I don't have a heart—"

"I'm very disappointed in you, Roger. Very, very disappointed. I'm giving you one more chance to pledge allegiance—oh, what's the use? If you want to be a fibber and a fool and a bad—naughty American, all right. You sit down and the rest of us will pledge allegiance."

By then, one or two kids in the back had been infected: robot imitations went the rounds; someone asked permission to take Roderick apart to see if he had a heart, someone else declared her own heart had been removed at the hospital...

Chauncey and his gang seemed friendlier at recess. They invited Roderick to play "Captain, May I."

The gaunt boy in the blue track-suit said, "Hey, Rick, are you really a robot? Boy, you sure gave old Dorano a hard time, boy, are you really one?"

Chauncey, hanging back, said, "Don't be stupid, Jimmy, there's no such thing as robots, they're like ghosts. No such thing."

Jimmy said, "There are so. Hey, Rick, lemme feel your muscle, jeeze you sure are tough, I busted my shoe kicking you, see? Hey, you wanna be captain?"

"I'm captain," Chauncey said. "I'm always captain."

"Owww, leggo, okay, let's choose for it."

"Okay, but I do the choosing."

Chauncey counted around the ring himself, Jimmy, Roderick, Larry, Eddie and Billy, eliminating them one by one:

Eeeny meeny miney moe

Catch a tiger by the toe.

"We gotta try it again," he said, when only Roderick was left. He went through it all again, this time adding, "If he hollers, let him go," knocking out in turn Billy, Jimmy, himself, Eddie, and Larry . . .

"Okay, that was practice and this time counts. Only Billy's out anyway because he's too little." Once more it was Roderick.

"Hey, jeeze, Chauncey, why don't we just let him—?"

"Okay, just once more, I think I got it right this time, Eeeny meeny miney moe, catch a tiger by the toe, if he hollers make him pay, fifty dollars every day, aw shit, I'm out already . . ."

"Look, are we gonna play or what, recess is almost over," said Larry.

"This time I got it. Eeeny meeny . . ." Chauncey began, going on to ". . . dollars every day. O-U-T spells out goes he, with a dirty dishrag on his knee, Eddie's out. Eeeny . . ."

"Look, it's gonna be me again," said Roderick. "If you wanta choose yourself all you gotta do is go back to the short rhyme now and—"

"Listen, smart-ass, I don't need no help from you." He went on to the end choosing Roderick again, began again with the short rhyme as Eddie went off to find Billy on the other side of the playground. ". . . tiger by the, aw jeeze, it's you again."

Larry said, "I'm tired of this shit. Recess is practically over, jeeze, I quit."

"You sonofabitch, you must of fixed it or something, Eeeny . . ." Chauncey quickly eliminated Jimmy, then himself, leaving Roderick, who said:

"Look, I don't care, *you* be captain, whatever that is, let's just—"

The bell went and Jimmy ran off, but Chauncey gripped the robot's arm. "Not so fast, we gotta settle this. *This* time whoever we finish up on is captain, see? Eeenymeenymineymocatchatigerbythetoe Jesus Christ you got it fixed even with just two of us . . ."

Roderick went in from recess with another dent on his torso.

Mr. Goun sat in one corner of Miss Borden's office stroking his face as though surprised to find no beard. "Well, sure, I was prepared for kids being kids, but—" He looked up as Ogilvy came in and dumped a pile of books on the desk. "Vandalism, ma'am."

"What?" Miss Borden took a last look at her computer terminal screen and sighed. "Always six things at once, just when I get down to budget

day—what vandalism?"

"Somebody's been over these with a razor blade, ma'am, they look like IBM cards or something."

Goun, who was younger, wondered what an IBM card might be.

"Okay, thanks, I'll look at them later, meanwhile why don't you do something about Mr. Goun here, real security problem for you, somebody burglarized his locker. This morning."

The guard pushed back his cap in the tradition of baffled policemen and whistled. "What did they get?"

Goun looked pained. "Only every one of my manuals for the sex education course, that's all."

"Yeah? Guess they couldn't wait."

"Not to mention a valuable psychology book, *The Dream World of the Adolescent Girl*, took me a year to run down a copy."

Ogilvy snickered. "'Rare' book, eh?"

"It happens to be a serious study of the, the actualization of catalyzing factors in the, in interpersonal relations, you wouldn't understand, I guess. The kid who took it probably thinks it's juicy stuff, but I—but let me know, will you? A thin blue book, let me know if you see any kid reading it. In the can or—"

"Right, chief." Ogilvy turned to go and bumped into Ms. Beek, moving like a sleepwalker.

Miss Borden stood up. "Yes, Joan?"

"I—I didn't know—"

"Your class, Joan. Who's watching them?"

"Oh—I—" Ms. Beek wandered out.

Goun said, "Not very articulate, is she? Since her nervous b—ah, trouble."

"Chemotherapy," Miss Borden explained. "She'll soon snap out of it and get right back in the swim again. Now let's see these books."

Goun opened a book of nursery rhymes. "*Blank, blank gander,*" he read. "*'Whither shall I wander/Upstairs and downstairs and in blank blank blank.'* Somebody's hacked out whole words, what is this anyway, 'put in his *blank* and pulled out a plum,' what's going on?"

She put on her glasses. "And here's A.A. Milne, I know some of these:

Where is Anne?

(Walking with her man)

Lost in a dream

(Lost among the buttercups)

Yes, and down here where it says:

What has she got in that firm little fist of hers, Somebody's [thumb] and it feels like Christopher's—

## Roderick Goes to School

This is terrible, who would, somebody's got a dirty imagination here, some nasty-minded little—"

"Yeah, and they cut the last two chapters out of *The Marvelous Land of Oz*. I can't make sense out of any of this. Some kid with an anxieta undifferentiated—"

"I know what you mean. Little savages, how can I in good conscience ask for a bigger book budget when—Oh before you go, do me a favor will you? I'm way behind on these individual assessment forms, wonder if you'd mind keeping an eye on this Wood boy for me? The little paraplegic, whatever he is, Mrs. Dorano's class, I ought to ask her really, but all she ever puts down is sweet, angelic, a darling innocent; try running that through the County Board computer, they'd have my job. So just, just look him over, will you? In an informal interview situ—you know the way to handle it, thanks."

"Sure. Sure I—sure." Before he could get out of the door, it opened and Captain Fest came in with an armload of reports.

"Just heard about your burglarization, Goun. Tough, tough. Kids got no respect for any damn thing, think they're king—you better put those trophies somewhere, ma'am, glass case in the hall like that is just an open invitation—well, here's the math skills reports, depressing reading for somebody, don't give a damn myself anymore." He followed Goun into the hall. "You know, I stopped giving a damn when I had twelve-year-olds, one day I asked them how many sixths in a whole, brightest one in the class thought maybe seven, how's that grab you?"

Moving with great energy, he left Goun behind, staring at the trophy case and muttering, "Sixths in a hole? In a hole?"

iii

**F**inish your nice tree drawings, everyone. Hurry up." Mrs. Dorano clapped her hands.

"Jennifer and I are going to pin up all the nicest ones for everyone to see. And, uh, Suzy dear, you pass out the new readers. Quiet! Anyone I see talking from now on is going to have his tree put in my wastebasket. Jennifer, hurry up, dear. Billy, let her have the drawing, finished or not."

"Miss, can I—?"

"Miss, Miss, Billy drew a boy's pee-pee!"

"QUIET! Suzy, they're right there, the stack of blue books on my desk, just pass them—Margery, sit DOWN!"

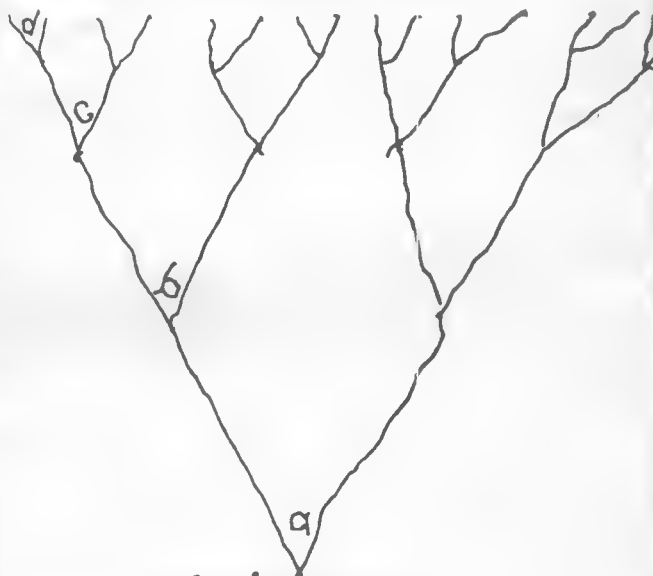
"But Miss, Billy drew—"

"Never mind what Billy draw—drew, you shouldn't even know what one of those looks like, just sit down and . . ." She shuffled through the stack of drawings quickly, eliminating those that looked even

remotely like body parts—Kids seemed to think of nothing but sex, sex, sex as it was. Too much of it in these promiscuity classes, that's where it came from. Mr. Goun, she'd seen him hovering in the hall, waiting to pounce on any passing child and pour corrupting filth into its little ear.

Most of the drawings looked as little like organs as they did trees, thank heaven. They looked variously like lollipops, fans, clouds, telegraph poles, and green squiggles. Little Chauncey had turned out a nice effort, incorporating a rubbing of some ornament—and at the bottom he had written DECIGEONS.

"Very, very good, Chauncey. I think what you meant to write was *deciduous*—I'll show you how to spell it, but I think it's wonderful that you even attempted such a grown-up word. I—oh!" She had come to little Roger Wood's drawing.



decigeons tree  
Roderick Wood

"Somebody's a copycat here," she said. "But who?"

"Not me, Mrs. Dorano." Chauncey grinned.

"Roger?"

"What?" He was peering into his new reader.

"Did you copy your tree drawing? It looks like a copy."

"Well, I guess all these decigeon tree drawings look the same, because heck—"

"That will do." She tore up his drawing. "As usual, Roger, you disappoint me."

"Hey, can I ask you about this here reader? It looks kinda hard and—"

"That will do, I said."



Ms. Beek looked as though she'd been weeping. Miss Borden, patting her arm, spoke to Captain Fest.

"Do you really have to barge in here? I was just in the middle of a counseling sess—"

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but the damndest thing, my binoculars are missing."

"Stolen?"

"Presume so. Had 'em locked up in my desk with a few, ah, personal papers, went out in the hall to have a word with Goun, came back to find it ransacked. Everything gone. Naturally nobody in the class saw anything." He passed a hand through his gray crewcut.

Miss Borden looked at a stain on his sleeve. "Is that blood? You weren't attacked?"

"That? No, it's nothing. Just interrogating one of the kids about a theft, he slipped and fell, that's all."

"I see. And you were talking to Mr. Goun when the robbery occurred?"

"Wanted to see if he's interested in joining a male teachers' drill team, I'm trying to form a crack—"

"Why male? Because I'm sure Miz Beek here would like—"

"With all due respect, ma'am, problem of different heights, different strides—anyway he was busy talking to that handicapped kid, Wood, wonder if maybe he doesn't take an unhealthy interest there, always following the kid around the corridors, talking to him in corners—"

"That's, I asked him to assess the boy."

"Whew! That's a relief, thought for a moment there . . . I mean you can't be too careful about fraternization—oops, sorry Miz Beek, forgot you were here, did I—?"

"Captain, why don't you go and fill out a form S-3, so that I can get Ogilvy to work on your binoculars?"

When he'd gone she patted Ms. Beek's arm again. "There now, he didn't upset you did he? Because we've all forgotten about that little incident, haven't we?"

"... forgotten . . ."

"Yes, I know you're having a little trouble remembering the number of your classroom, but I just know you'll soon be back in the swim."

At recess, Mr. Goun was waiting for him again. He was always lurking somewhere, the droopy red moustache (normally pointing to 4:37) jumping to 3:42 in a rigid smile. He always asked the same questions: did Roderick's parents work? Did they fight a lot? Did he blame them for his handicap? What did he dream of?

Roderick made up a dream or two that put the

moustache to 5:32 (and the eyebrows to 12:55).

Today they stood by the trophy case. Roderick was just saying, "... then there was this big deciegeon tree, with instead of apples hanging on there was skulls . . ." when a big hand grabbed his arm.

"Good work, Goun, we got him this time." Captain Fest gave the robot a shake. "Here's the trophy case, busted open and empty, and here's the culprit. You see any of his accomplices?"

"No, look, I don't think Roger here could've—"

"No? Just look at him, guilt written all over that tin face. Let me get him alone for a minute, I'll find out where they hid the swag. Told Miss Borden this would happen, but does she listen? No, and Ogilvy, our so-called security man, always off somewhere pulling his pudding . . ."

"Maybe we'd better just take him to the office, Fest, straighten out this whole, I'm sure there's some mistake."

"And this little bastard made it. Okay you, MARCH!"

Mr. Fest gripped his arm all the way to the office, where Miss Borden told them all to sit down and get calm.

"Now, Roger," she said, staring down into the glass depths of his eyes. "I want the truth. Have you seen our school trophies?"

"Trophies?" he said. "You mean like a thing with a little silver statue of a basketball player, seven inches high and made in Hong Kong? And a disc about four inches across that says '3rd Place, State Spelling Contest, 1961'? And a gold football for the all-county champs, 1974?"

"Yes, have you seen them?"

"Nope."

"Ma'am, you just let me get him alone for a coupla minutes—" Goun said. "Give him a chance, maybe he saw them in the case?"

Roderick shook his head. "Nope, I never saw them at all."

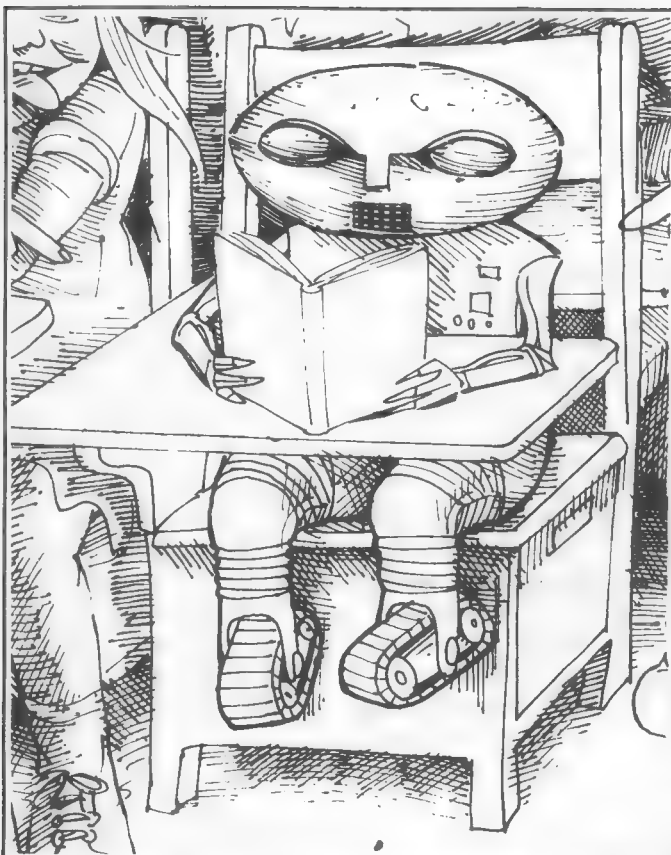
Miss Borden's color scheme of buff and blue was momentarily spoiled by bright spots of color in her pale buff cheeks. "Young man, this is serious! If you don't come clean with us, you'll have to talk to the sheriff. *Reform school*, is that what you want?"

"Wants the buckle end of a belt laid across his backside, if you ask me. Suppose he didn't see my binocs, either!"

"Or my book!"

The interrogation went on for an hour before Miss Borden called the sheriff. "Be right over," she said, putting the receiver down. "He's watching some game show on tv. God, I hate all this! Getting the juvenile authorities in on it, we'll all end up spending hours filling out forms—*please*, Roger! Please confess!"

"But I never saw them trophies,"



"Jesus Christ, if you never saw *them trophies* how do you know exactly what they look like, even the engraving, even—?"

"Oh, easy." Roderick laid a shiny little lump of metal on the desk. "I found this by the trophy case when I was talking to Mr. Goun just now. It must of broken off one of them trophies, and see? It's a foot wearing a basketball shoe. And it looks like silver, and if you look real close you can see it says Made in Hong Kong. And the statue must be about seven inches high, right?"

Goun nodded. "He did pick up something while we were talking."

"Okay," said Fest. "But how about the rest? The spelling medal, for instance? You saw the engraving—"

"Nope. What I saw was one of the kids in Mrs. Dorano's class this morning when we were drawing trees, one of the kids hid something under their drawing, only it came out on the paper when they rubbed a crayon over it. '3rd Place, State Spelling Contest, 1961.'"

"Which kid?" said Fest.

"Ask Miss Dorano which kid. I don't fink."

"Okay how about a full-size gold football, you don't tell me you never saw that?"

"Nope, never did. But in the creative activities area there's a picture on the wall of this football team with a banner, 1974 All-County Champs. And a guy in front is holding this gold-colored thing, looks like a football only shiny. So I figured—"

Miss Borden said, "Jesus Christ," and reached for the phone.

Chauncey and Billy were beating up some littler kid. Chauncey had the kid's hair in both hands

and was using it to bash his head against the curb. Billy stood by, kicking at the kid's feet.

"Hey, come on, Rick, let's get this guy!"

"Nope. It ain't hero-ic, picking on a littler kid. Only villains do stuff like that."

"Piss on you then, this is fun!"

Roderick decided the really hero-ic thing to do would be to stop them. "Okay, stop, you guys."

"Piss on—ow!"

Roderick shoved Chauncey hard, pushing him over sideways.

"Ow, Christ, I skint my knee!" Chauncey started to cry. "You fuckin' bully!"

"Look, I'm sorry, Chaunce, I—" He forgot what he was about to say, for at that moment Billy smashed a brick into his eye.

"Hey, look, you put his eye out, boy, are you gonna get it, hey...?"

"I'm gettin' the fuck outa here..."

"Me too, wait up..."

When the vision in his remaining eye cleared, Roderick was alone with the littler kid, who had a bloody nose.

"Are you a robot or what?"

"That's right, I'm Roderick the robot. You okay?"

"Yeah, thanks. My name's Nat. I thought they was gonna kill me or something. Boy, they'd be sorry if they did. They wouldn't have Nat to kick around anymore." Nat smiled at him. "Hey, you know what?"

"What?" Roderick knew the next line: *You saved my life, pal.* He waited for it.

"You look pretty fuckin' dumb with one eye, you know?"

iv

**M**iss Borden unreeled a gold chain with a tiny ballpoint pen at the end. "Okay, Bill, spit it out."

"Shouldn't you see the boy yourself first?"

"He's off today. Mr. Wood's taking him to the city, I guess, for some eye tests. Anyway, you have observed him?"

"Yes, well, no, not in a direct observational, more in a peripherally informalized situ—"

"You've seen him in the hall, I know. Go on."

"Yes, contacted him a few times in the hall and elicited a response or two, nothing def—"

"How's his reading?"

"Reading skills, yes, he did say he was having trouble with this new reader Mrs. Dorano assigned."

She marked on the yellow form. "Reading problem, I was afraid of that. Now how does he get along with other kids?"

"Socially he's, there seems to be a nomenclatural mix-up there, some difficulty with meaningful

involvement in the cultural mainstream . . . maybe an identity crisis even; other kids keep calling him a robot, you know? And when I asked him why, he said, 'Because I am a robot.'

She shook her head. "All too familiar these days, schizoid pattern: usually parents both work, kid's alone too much--"

"Divisive destructuring of the ego conceptualiza--"

"That's right. I ought to send him to George for a battery, I mean a battery of reassessment tests, only right now George has a pretty full case-load over at the junior high, you know, what with that Russian roulette club--"

"I imagine. How is the Vulich boy, by the way?"

"As well as can be expected, understand his parents are seeking a court order to have the machine turned off--where were we?"

"Think we ought to do something, this Wood boy told me he dreams of skulls and scissor trees . . ."

"Well sure, I'll try to get George to fit him in, otherwise we'll just have to let him go on thinking he's a Martian--yes, at least we can send him to Ms. Beek for some remedial, hand me one of those green forms, will you, Bill? No, the leaf green ones . . ."

The new eye cost Pa and Ma a lot of money, but at least he could go right back to school. The other kids seemed glad to see him, even Chauncey.

Roderick couldn't figure Chauncey out at all. Whenever they were alone, the bigger boy called him "Rick," treated him like a pal, and even shared stuff with him, as now:

"Hey, Rick, you wanna see some real dirty pitchers?"

"Dirty?"

"Yeah, I found 'em in old Festy's desk. And these really neat binoculars too, only Billy keeps 'em at home, me and him take turns with 'em. Here, take a look."

He pulled up his sweater and fished out a dog-eared magazine, *Stud Ranch*. Hiding behind Ogilvy's security hut in the corner of the playground (Ogilvy was never in it), they turned the pages and stared at pictures of people without clothes.

"Hey, looka that, wow!"

"Yeah, wow, but how come--"

"Look, looka that! Boy, they sure do weird stuff out West."

A pair of people were wrestling. "Hey is it dirty because like this they wrestle on the ground or--?"

"Naw, dirty is *dirty*, you know, like sexy. See, this is how they get babies."

"This? With all this, these whips and spurs, this barb wire--?"

Chauncey hesitated. "Well, sure. Must be, look, it probably tells all about it here--"

"Lemme see."

Whoa there! Wile Calamity Jayne shucks her buckskins to saddle up for some bunkhouse fun, Miss Kitti is "bound" to please some lonesome cowpoke. But what's Brazos gonna do with thet there branding iron?

"They don't get babies like that."

"Sure they do, ask anybody, ask Billy, when his old man's cow had a calf, they tied a rope around her neck and look here at this one, this 'necktie party girl,' she's got--"

"Yeah, but hey, wait a minute, why do they have to wear all this stuff?"

Chauncey said, "Look stupid, it's called Stud Ranch, so they all gotta wear these belts with studs, boy, when my little brother was born my old lady had to wear all kinds of stuff to keep the baby from coming out her belly button too soon, I guess--hey, wow, looka that rattlesnake--men don't have babies because they take pills, I guess--looka that, 'Bathtime at the Rocking 69'--see, we had all about it last year, these little tadpoles inside and the Vast Difference--"

"Hahaha, looka that, he thinks this other guy's a girl, look, it says, 'When a gay cabaleero . . . What's a cabaleero, anyway?'"

"Just some word, who knows. Wow! Looka that pair!"

"Year, Colt .45 Peacemakers, the sheriff's got one like that, only not so fancy . . . Hey, but Chauncey, what about the tadpoles?"

"Aw, who cares, sex is too complicated. Let's play guns, okay?"

But whenever he was with the gang, Chauncey called him "freaky" and threatened to take a can-opener and rip his guts out. You just couldn't figure out some people.

Roderick couldn't figure out Mrs. Dorano either. She was always telling the other kids to be especially nice to him because of his handy cap, and then when they passed out the readers she gave him a different one, real hard and no pictures at all, and all long words. He had to spend hours every night at home going through the dictionary, and it still didn't make sense.

Billy agreed, it wasn't fair. "Heck, my reader's okay. All about this here Dick and Jane and how their mother works hard at the car factory, and like how they get helped by Big Joe the social worker. How come yours is different, boy, I'd make a stink about that."

"Yeah, listen to this, it don't make sense: 'The actualization of catalyzing factors in interpersonal relationships is provided first by the furtherance of

**"Following the alleged suicide  
of a teacher at  
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come rumors of serious mental  
disturbances among the pupils.  
Teachers have confirmed  
that at least one boy  
thinks he is a robot."**

participatory options within the framework of an unstructured data base of conceptual parameters, notwithstanding the counterproductive and often marginal motivational mix inducing affectual restructuring of the—' Shit man, this doesn't even tell a story. I mean, it's supposed to be about this girl, a doll-scent girl, only here I am on page twenty-one and they don't even have her name down here yet."

"Boy, I'd make a stink —"

"Yeah, I guess it don't matter now they're switching me to Miz Beek for redeemial anyway, I got this other reader where they spell everything like it sounds..."

Jump. Jump. Jump.

See Bob jump.

Bob jumps on a fast wagon.

Bob gøz fastr óan a skul bus.

The hour started off well, with Miz Beek cheerful and pleasant. She sat with Roderick and two other kids around a little table. While they read aloud, she nodded and smiled and occasionally swallowed another of her little white pills.

But towards the end of the hour she no longer seemed to be listening. After making a quick note in her Teacher's Manual, she got up and left the room.

"I bet thee'th going wee-wee," said one of the kids. "Thee hath to go wee-wee."

The other said, "L-let's g-g-get outa here, hey."

"But thee might come back after thee taketh a pith."

The door opèned, but it was only Mr. Fest, telling them he knew all of their names and not to try anything just because Miz Beek was out of the room, understand?

"Yethir, Mithter Fetht."

"Y-y-y—sure."

"I'm glad you know my name," said Roderick, "because everybody else around here keeps calling me—"

"At ease! At ease! I don't want to hear another peep outa this room."

He went away. They waited.

"Look, thee forgot her pillth. Let'th get high, come on."

"H-he-hell with that. I'm g-g-gonna s-sell these up in the eighth-graders' c-c-c—toilet." The stammerer grabbed the pill bottle and ran out, chased by the lisper. Roderick waited until the bell rang, then leaned over and read Miz Beek's note.

"ôu îdeea uv kumbiniNg speeCh Thayrupee wiTh reemeedyul reediNg iz just wun mör exampul ov ôu braykdown ov ôu hōl godawful sistum HwiCh ôa keep erjiNg mee tu joyn (az ôôō peepul wur glū..."

Nat walked him home from school. "I feel safer," he explained. "Not that I'm really afraid of Chauncey and his gang, but heck, two of us got a lot better chance than one, right?"

"Right," said Roderick. "I was just wondering, you know, how come I read all right at home, only at school everything goes wrong?"

"Yeah? Hey, we could become blood brothers, pledge ourselves to fight to the death, back to back in case Chaun—"

"Look, I ain't got any blood."

"We could ufe oil then, you got oil."

So Roderick tapped a few drops of hydraulic fluid and Nat took a drop of blood from his thumb, and they mixed them.

"We both swear, right? To defend ourselves against anybody, even Chaunce, we swear on my blood and your oil. Brothers."

"Brothers."

"To the death."

"To the death." Roderick walked him to his door. "See you tomorrow."

"Not tomorrow, hey, remember? We got the day off on account of Miz Beek drowning herself in the swimming pool."

"See you the day after, then. Brother."

"Okay brother."

"Settle down, all of you," said the principal. "I'm not even going to start until you're quiet. What's more, no one goes home until we finish here, understood?"

They shifted uneasily, and one or two who had been glancing through the pages of *Educationalist Today* sat up straight.

"That's better. Now you all know why I've called this special meeting. But in case anyone hasn't seen today's *Herald*, let me read it out to you."

**"ROBERT" BOY AT NEWER SCHOOL:  
MORE INSANITY?**

Following the alleged suicide of a teacher at Newer Public School (Stubbs Cty) come rumors of serious mental disturbances among the pupils. Teachers have confirmed that at least one boy thinks he is a



mechanical robot.

The boy, Robert Wool, "acts just like a little machine," according to second-grade teacher Mrs. Delia Dorano. He believes he has mechanical grappling hooks for hands and tank tracks in place of feet. "Robert doesn't even answer to his name," she said. "No wonder, what with the constant harping on sex and filth everywhere you look. We must protect our children from the sex merchants of the state educational system."

George George, school psychologist, blamed the computerizing of modern society, including our schools. "We have teaching machines, testing machines, magnetic report cards," he said. "Where do we stop?" According to another source, books in the school library have been keypunched on to IBM cards which are unreadable. Said George, "It's getting like Brig Bother around here." Mr. George is the brother of Hal George, prominent hog auctioneer.

#### *Russian Roulette Club*

Newer Junior High, like Newer P.S., has had its share of tragedies. Last year Beanie Vulich, 16, became the first tragic victim of the school's "Russian roulette club," whose members made use of a school computer to select a dueling pistol at random from a number . . .

"It goes on," she said, "to mention drugs sold openly in the eighth-grade washroom, thefts and vandalism, and a security man with a drink problem. Any comments?"

Ogilvy was the first to speak. "Not fair," he said. "Buncha lies and distortions. Like, sure I take a drink now and then, but they make it sound like I spend all day lying in an alley somewheres with a bottle of Tokay in a paper bag."

"What really bothers me," said Miss Borden, "is the way certain people are using this tragic suicide as an excuse to whine about their own pet peeves." She looked at Mrs. Dorano. "Certain people are going to be sorry they ever opened their big—"

"The truth will out," said Mrs. Dorano. "You can't suppress—"

Mr. Goun jumped to his feet. "Suppress, who the hell are you to talk about—?"

At the same time Mr. George said, "How did I know they were going to print it that way? I didn't think you'd take my criticism in a personalized way, rather than in a societally—"

"Filth and corruption driving that young woman to—"

Captain Fest said, "Self-discipline, a hard line, lest we forget, molding Americans, shaping the future—"

"—nothing but plain murder, no better than abor—"

"—catalyzing factors—"

"—easy way out, no backbone, no self-discip—"

"—building a bridge—"

"Quiet." Miss Borden looked at George. "You all disappoint me, you especially, George. Whining to the papers behind my back instead of getting down to work—My God, you're the school psychologist. We pay you to fix these kids."

"Fix? Fix? You talk as if they were a bunch of machines! What do you suggest, I get out the old tool-kit and maybe tighten up a few loose screws here and there?"

Mrs. Dorano clapped her hands over her ears. "I won't listen to that filth—I won't!"

Captain Fest muttered, "Like to fix that little Robert whatsisname myself. Hear he refuses to pledge allegiance to his country's flag. You give him to me for a week, I'll knock the robot crap out of him."

George turned on him. "Knock the crap out of him, all you can think of, right? If you had the slightest understanding—Look, what you ought to be doing is using his problem, making it work for us, for him. I mean, if he thinks he's a robot maybe he should be on a teaching machine or—"

"Good idea," said Miss Borden. "That's it, then. Captain, you take charge of this boy and set up a teaching machine program." She checked something off on a form. "What I like to see, people forgetting their little individual differences and all pulling together. So much for one child's problem. Now how about some of these bigger issues? Dope-pushing, theft, vandalism—any suggestions?"

One of the younger teachers murmured something and Miss Borden took it up. "Did you say bridge-building, Ms. Russo? That's the first sensible suggestion I've heard so far. Isn't that our job, after all, building bridges? Reaching out—"

Ms. Russo blushed. "No, what I shaid was—"

"—reaching out to isolated, disadvantaged children who—"

"I shaid I hope this doesn't take long because I've got a dental appointment."

"Dental appointment. I see."

"Yah, to have a bridge rebuilt. Shee, what happened was that little bash—that Chaunshy Bangfield hit me in the mouth with a trophy. I was making him voluntarily return it."

Someone muttered, "He reached out to her all right, the little disadvantaged—"

"Any more suggestions?"

Goun spoke of actualizing the problem within a contextual framework of structured situations ranging from verbal correctives to disenrollment. In such an intrasystemic . . .

The digital clock wiped away another minute, and another. 17

# Dr. Van Helsing's Handy Guide to Ghost Stories Part II by Kurt Van Helsing

THE GOOD DOCTOR RECONVENES HIS CLASS  
AND ASKS A FEW HARD QUESTIONS:  
MUST THE GHOST-STORY WRITER BELIEVE IN GHOSTS?  
MUST THE READER?

*"In the end it is the mystery that lasts and not the explanation."*

—Sacheverell Sitwell,  
"For Want of the  
Golden City"

Despite the popular successes of some of today's paperback horror writers, and despite the verdict of the box office (where sf and horror films now count for forty percent of ticket sales), the modern world has shown a diminished regard for shorter fiction and has proved inhospitable to the more traditional sorts of ghosts. They've been faced with the choice of adapting or dying out. Explaining why he'd included no "conventional ghost stories" in a wartime anthology, writer Julius Fast argued that "the last original ghost plot was hashed to death along with the vampires and werewolves" (a somewhat debatable point, I should think); and in a more recent anthology, *Unlikely Ghosts* (1969), James Turner asserts: "The ghost has become as absurd today as he was serious yesterday. There is little of the world left for him or her to haunt.... Satire has almost destroyed him."

Many writers blame this situation on a general "loss of faith" and, specifically, on the loss of belief in individual spirits. Russell Kirk sees a decline of religion and, in its place, the modern worship of "St. Science," while the British writer Hugh Walpole, distantly descended from both the gothic novelist and, on his mother's side, R. H. Barham, deplored the prevailing skepticism of our times: "The human flesh creeps in every kind of way," he wrote. "What makes one man creep merely makes another yawn. In these scientific days, in fact, creep-making is not so easy. Everyone is wise, incredulous, and scornful."

But is skepticism really so modern an attitude? Is it a loss of belief that's made ghost fiction unfashionable? History suggests otherwise. Though in ages past the belief in ghosts was more widespread, there were always those who doubted. Confucius was unable to make up his mind about ghosts; some ancient Greeks claimed to see them, but others questioned their existence. Cicero was a believer; he concluded that ghosts were the damned, condemned to linger near the scene of their crimes, and noted that a fellow Roman "has seen such spirits a thousand times and, from long habit, has lost all fear of them." (In this the man may have been characteristic of his age: "In the first and second centuries," writes the historian Samuel Dill, in *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius* [1920], "apparitions became the commonest facts of life, and only the hardest minds remained incredulous.") Yet Pliny, a contemporary, remained skeptical, asking one correspondent, "I would... willingly know if you are of the opinion that phantoms are real figures, and carry in them some kind of divinity; or are empty vain shadows, raised in our imaginations by the effect of fear." On this question St. Augustine, too, admitted ignorance: "I confess I am not able to understand it," he wrote. "The finite cannot deal with the infinite."

If there were any skeptics during the Middle Ages, they knew enough to hold their peace; like angels, demons, and the Little People, ghosts were simply a different order of being in the divine scheme. Paracelsus listed spots in Germany where woodland elves patrolled the land in "little coats some two feet long," and Michael Constantine Psellus, an eleventh-century Byzantine philosopher in the Greek

emperor's court, held that demons were quite corporeal, having "aerial bodies, that they are mortal, live and die, that they are nourished and have excrements, that they feel pain if they be hurt or stricken." If their bodies were cut in two, they would immediately come together again.

Yet by the Renaissance the doubters were everywhere, openly questioning established belief. There were always many, of course, to take the side of the faithful. Ludwig Lavater, an oft-quoted sixteenth-century spiritualist, maintained that ghosts were "frequently seen in monasteries and about churchyards, marshes, great buildings, solitary places, or places notorious because of some murder, &c" (all the settings described in the Victorian magazines), and ghosts were equally visible on the Elizabethan stage: "When Kemble at Drury Lane in 1794 let Macbeth gaze upon an empty seat in the scene of



THE SKELETON IN THE CUPBOARD



## ENCOUNTER WITH A GHOST N<sup>R</sup> BRIERLEY HILL

royal revelry and apostrophise the vacant air," says Montague Summers, "all this was absolutely alien to Shakespeare's intention and practice."

Most Elizabethans, though, were decidedly skeptical about spirits: Reginald Scot's *Discovery of Witchcraft*, for example, attributed such visions to sheer hysteria, and Shakespeare himself has a character in *King John* deride those who can see

"No natural exhalation in the sky,

No scope of nature, no distempered day,  
No common wind, no  
customed event,

But they will pluck away his  
natural cause

And call them meteors,  
prodigies, and signs,  
Abortives, presages, and  
tongues of Heaven."

The same doubts prevailed throughout the following century. Though in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) Robert Burton noted that "Dev-

ils many times appear to men, and affright them out of their wits, sometimes walking at noonday, sometimes at nights, counterfeiting dead men's ghosts," and that the ghosts themselves "often foretell men's deaths by several signs, as knocking, groanings, &c.," elsewhere he admitted that "the question is very obscure, according to Postellus [Gulielmus Postellus, a sixteenth-century French writer], 'full of controversy and ambiguity,' beyond the reach of human capacity."

The issue was still controversial in Victorian days. In 1831, with tongue in cheek, Walter Scott wrote an erudite essay on the question of "ghosts before the law" (they are, it seems, difficult to swear in as witnesses—a fact which Isaac Asimov and Frederik Pohl exploit in their comic ghost story "Legal Rites"), and as late as the 1880s a few eccentric Irish litigants were still trying to break the leases on their homes by claiming that the premises were "haunted." When, in 1882, the newly formed Society for Psychical

Research asked seventeen thousand Britons whether they'd ever experienced "a vivid impression of seeing or being touched by a living being or inanimate object, or of hearing a voice; which impression so far as you could discover, was not due to any external physical cause," some 1684 people—nearly ten percent—said that they had.

No doubt there would still be a sizable percentage were the question posed today; the credulous are always with us. But is it this same ten percent that forms the audience for supernatural fiction? Montague Summers, himself a professed believer, felt that such was indeed the case, and went even further: the ideal supernatural writer, he argued, must also believe in ghosts. "The ghost stories told by one who believes in and is assured of the reality of apparitions and haunting," he said, "will be found to have a sap and savour that the narrative of the writer who is using the supernatural as a mere circumstance



to garnish his fiction must inevitably lack and cannot attain.... Very fine tales have, no doubt, been written by authors who regarded the supernatural as just a fantasy and a flam. They topple, however, whether on the one side into nightmare indigestion or on the other into vague aridities that are in fine meaningless.... He may succeed in duping his readers, but not for long. Presently his wand will snap short, his charms will lose their potency and mystic worth; he will soon have turned the last page of his grimoire; he steps all involuntarily out of the circle, the glamour dissipates, and the spell is broken!"

Unfortunately, Summers weakened his case by singling out the work of Bulwer-Lytton, "a serious and discriminating student of the occult." Summers found his tales "convincing"; others prefer to see them as, in Alexander Laing's words, "all chair-snatching tarradiddle."

Edith Wharton makes perhaps a more convincing case; her fiction is beautifully controlled, and she herself appears to have been something of a believer. "Till I was twenty-seven or eight," she wrote, "I could not sleep in the room with a book containing a ghost-story, and I have frequently had to burn books of this kind, because it frightened me to know that they were downstairs in the library!"

Writing a decade later, H. R. Wakefield expressed a somewhat more cautious faith: "I am a sceptic of sceptics, but not, I hope, a wooden one. That there are many things in Heaven and on Earth for which we have no explanation, and for which, in all

probability, we shall never have an explanation, is certainly part of my philosophy, and I have never written a tale in which are recorded happenings that I do not believe could occur.... For us there are only those faintest of glimpses and softest of whispers. Sometimes I fancy I see something flicker and hear something stir. And that is why I sometimes write a ghost story. There is, I believe, something there, but I shall never know what; and, rest assured, neither will you."

Yet writers equally as powerful expressed no doubts at all. A. E. Coppard boasted that he didn't believe in ghosts. Arthur Machen confessed, a trifle wistfully, that he'd never seen any of the spirits he wrote about; and throughout his life H. P. Lovecraft, describing himself as "a clear-cut atheist and materialist," saw the cosmos as "a mindless vortex, a seething ocean of blind forces," and scorned "the immortality myth" as one of "the sugary delusions of religion." ("A life snuffed out," he wrote, "survives no more than an electric light smashed to pieces.") Thomas Hardy was another unbeliever, though obviously unhappy with the role: he once declared he'd give ten years of his life to see a ghost—which more than rivaled Houdini's famous offer of five thousand dollars to any "spiritualist" whose feats the great magician couldn't duplicate.

Both men would probably have liked to make good on their offers; after all, what is ten years, or five thousand dollars, against the chance of immortality? Even if one hasn't seen a ghost, one may still want to be one.

The skeptics' arguments are persuasive on this point: prefacing *The Haunted Omnibus* (1937) with a warning that "the editor does not admit to a belief in ghosts," Laing points out that "a non-believer has as much right to enjoy a ghost story as anyone else. Dante's *Inferno* is not dependent for its effect upon a literal belief that the narrator's guide was in truth the shade of Virgil." Another editor, Bohun Lynch, goes even further: "People who 'believe in ghosts,'" he argues, "are seldom able to write good ghost stories, or to enjoy reading them." He finds such people to be more interested in logical exposition than in good atmospheric writing.

Bulwer-Lytton's graceless prose



HORRIBLE DISCOVERY—THE SKELETON OF A NUN



lends support to this argument; yet how to explain the fact that a cultured, highly sophisticated modern British ghost-story writer such as Robert Aickman was also a believer? Is this sort of belief a help or a hindrance? The answer, of course, is that, as literary historian Edward Wagenknecht says, "The word *belief* may be spoken with many different accents. The actor believes in the character he is creating, though he does not believe as the theologian believes, nor yet as the devotee."

One of America's foremost critics, I. A. Richards, illuminated these differences in his 1929 essay on "Doctrine in Poetry." There are, he theorized, two forms of belief—"intellectual belief" and "emotional belief." The former has little bearing on a writer's art, but the latter, founded on a strong emotional commitment to the theme of the work, is absolutely vital. "In primitive man, as innumerable observers have remarked, any idea which opens a ready outlet to emotion ... is quickly believed. We remain much more primitive in this phase of our behaviour than in intellectual matters. ... There are obviously countless ideas in poetry which, if put into this logical context, must be disbelieved at once. But this intellectual disbelief does not imply that emotional belief in the same idea is either impossible or even difficult—much less that it is undesirable."

One of the "illogical" ideas he

cites is a key passage in *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*—"The horned Moon, with one bright star/Within the nether tip"—which, while logically inconceivable (though optical illusions of this kind have occasionally been recorded), is yet one of the most haunting images in the entire poem. Coleridge himself might have attributed its success, in his famous phrase, to "the willing suspension of disbelief," and Richards does not disagree—although he has some reservations about the wording: "We are neither aware of a disbelief nor voluntarily suspending it in these cases. It is better to say that the question of belief or disbelief, in the intellectual sense, never arises when we are reading well."

Apropos of Wakefield's complaint in "Farewell to All Those!" about modern readers' inability to read ghost stories ("They'd as soon read binomial theorem stories"), Richards ends with a timely warning: "The absence of intellectual belief need not cripple emotional belief, though evidently enough in some persons it may. But the habit of attaching emotional belief only to intellectually certified ideas is strong in some people; it is encouraged by some forms of education; it is perhaps becoming, through the increased prestige of science, more common. For those whom it conquers, it means 'Good-bye to poetry.'"

Richards's conclusions must not be construed as an invitation to



**TERRIBLE DISCOVERY OF A SKELETON**

double-think; the levels on which we may enjoy an idea are quite distinct from those on which we analyze it, for, as Wagenknecht says, the reader or writer of supernatural fiction "may disbelieve with his mind ... yet still believe with his blood." Therefore, the oft-quoted comment of Madame du Deffand, who, when asked if she believed in ghosts, replied "No, but I am afraid of them," is, in Edith Wharton's estimation, "much more than the cheap paradox it seems to many." It is simply a description of the truth—and one to which all the authorities subscribe. Forced to acknowledge M. R. James's cool skepticism—"Do I believe in ghosts? ... I am prepared to consider evidence and accept it if it satisfies me"—Wakefield concluded that "unless the writer can, at least temporarily, alarm himself, he will never alarm anyone else." Alluding to a classic James tale whose intruding spirit displays "a horrible, an intensely horrible, face of crumpled linen," he suggested: "While James was writing 'Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad,' I'm certain he was also casting a furtive inner eye at spectral heaped bed-clothes forming into fearful shapes. No doubt he soon laughed the image away, but he must have known it for a time."

"The teller of supernatural tales should be well frightened in the telling," advised Wharton, and Wakefield agreed: "Before you can scare others, you must be scared yourself. Ghostly fear is transmitted, not concocted." In fact, Russell Kirk says that, "for the sake of his art, the author of ghostly narrations ought never to enjoy freedom from fear." He cites as an example the case of the Anglo-Irish ghost-story writer J. Sheridan LeFanu, who seems to have died during one of his recurring nightmares and who, therefore, may be said to have died "literally of fright." 17



**A BURGLAR BITTEN BY A SKELETON.**

# The Loaner



by Gary Brandner

HE WAS JUST A HACK . . . BUT THE CHANCE TO BE A GENIUS  
WAS RIGHT THERE AT HIS FINGERTIPS.

**I**t was ugly and heavy and awkward to carry up the three flights of stairs to my room. The black iron frame was scabbed with rust. When I set it down on my writing table it was all wrong—clumsy and out of place. Not neat and efficient like my electric portable. But the electric had quit on me in the middle of a sentence and was now down the street in Al's Typewriter Repair. The ancient black machine was a loaner Al had reluctantly dug up for me. With a

deadline approaching, I couldn't afford to lose a day's work, so I sat down to try out the relic.

*Pack my box with five dozen liquor jugs.*

The keys all worked, but they were stiff and foreign to my fingers. When a writer works eight, nine hours a day with one typewriter, the machine becomes an extension of his body. He doesn't have to stop and remind himself where the tab key is or which side the back-space is on. Switching suddenly

to a different machine is like learning to use an artificial limb. Using the beat-up old loaner was like replacing a hand with a potato masher.

The book I was into when my electric conked out was entitled *Vixen of Foxholme*. It is what they call a "plantation novel." Noble slaves and nasty overseers and lots of hot-breathing women of all shades. You probably wouldn't recognize my real name, but when I write a plantation novel I am Clarissa Wylde. When I do a private-eye yarn I am Steve Dunn. For gothics I become Victoria Croft. On science fiction . . . But you get the idea.

When I got out of college I was going to write, if not the Great American Novel, at least some universal truths that would make people smack their foreheads and exclaim, "Why, of course, that's the way it is!" That was fifteen years ago. Now I write whatever kind of book Jerry Stein figures he can sell with his cheap string of paperbacks. Okay, I'm a hack. It's a living, and it beats stoop labor. I think.

*Pack my box with five dozen liquor jugs.*

I had always liked the imagery of the liquor jugs better than the jumping fox or the loyal party men for limbering up. The loaner made a heavy *clunka-chunka-chunk* sound instead of the soft *tappy-tap* of my electric. It was like going from a Mercedes to a Model T.

Okay, enough limbering up. I yanked out the scratch paper with the liquor-jug order and rolled in a fresh sheet of bond. I shut my eyes for a minute and tried to think about *Vixen of Foxholme*. I conjured up smoldering glances, bulging bodices, and pistol duels . . . and then everything seemed to fade. I just started to type *clunka-chunka-chunk*. I've been writing long enough to know that when the words start to flow like cream from a pitcher, you don't interrupt. I watched in a kind of daze as the finished pages piled up.

By nightfall I had a hundred pages completed, and suddenly I was too tired to keep my eyes open. I pushed myself up from the typewriter and went to bed.

In the morning my fingers were sore and my wrists ached from pounding on the stiff old keys. I made a cup of instant coffee, got a stale doughnut out of the refrigerator, and sat down to read over what I had written.

I was stunned to discover that Foxholme Plantation and its resident vixen were gone with the, uh, wind. No fiery mistress could I find. No dashing riverboat gambler. No proud but loyal mammy.

It was my work, all right. I recognized in the characters people from my life. There were incidents and ideas and feelings that were mine alone, but they were set down in a way I would never have done it. The thing was hopeless. There were no heavy sex scenes. Not even a good fight. One hundred pages

without a heaving breast or a moist thigh. What could I have been thinking of? I shoved the pile of manuscript aside and reached for a fresh sheet. I had to get the Foxholme Vixen in bed with somebody, and fast.

The door buzzer sounded. I thought about ignoring it. I had lost a day already and could not afford to waste time with visitors. Another buzz. What the hell, I hadn't started yet, so I might as well see who it is. If I didn't answer I would wonder about it all day, and there would go my concentration. I went over and put my mouth close to the speaking unit.

"Yeah?"

"I gotta talk to you."

It was the voice of my agent, Lou Freund. The fact that he came around in person to see his few clients will give you an idea how successful he was. I sighed and pushed the button that unlocked the downstairs door.

Lou jogged up the stairs and down the hall to my room. He lived his life as though he had a cab outside with the meter running.

"How many *Foxholme* chapters you got?" he said, blinking furiously. "Jerry Stein wants to push the pub date ahead and I told him I'd bring over whatever you had."

"I, uh, didn't get as much done as I hoped. My typewriter broke down and I had to take it to the shop."

He jerked a thumb at the machine on my writing table. "What do you call that, a Mixmaster?"

"It might as well be. I don't work so good on a strange machine, and they don't come any stranger than that one."

Lou wasn't listening. He was riffling through the stack of manuscript I had typed the day before, blinking as he speed-read the pages.

"What's this?"

"Just something I was fooling with yesterday."

"A hundred pages of fooling?"

"I'll get right on *Foxholme* and let you have chapters tomorrow, okay?"

"Yeah, yeah, I'll just take this stuff with me now."

"What for? Stein's not going to go for it."

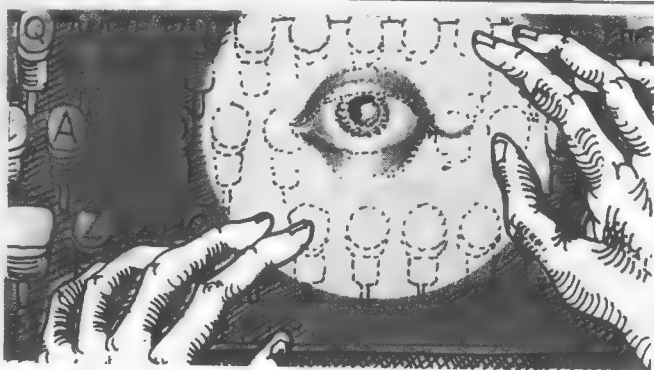
"You want to trust me or not?"

"Okay, I trust you."

Lou scooped the pages into a manila folder and dashed out the door. "I'll get back to you," he called from the landing.

I spent the rest of the morning hunched in my chair, telling myself I had to get to work. The loaner squatted on the table, ugly and accusing, filling me with guilt. I called Al down at the shop and he gave me some runaround about being overloaded and it might be a couple of days before he could get to work on my electric. I yelled at him that I needed it to pay





my mother's doctor bills, but he was unmoved.

Defeated, I sat down in front of the loaner and cranked in a sheet of bond. I stared at the blank white page, trying to remember what the hell my *Foxholme* heroine looked like. Coppery hair, probably. Creamy skin, long legs, big boobs. I had written her in a dozen books; I could do the description in my sleep. But for some reason I couldn't get the words on paper.

*Pack my box with five dozen liquor jugs.*

I banged my fist on the keyboard, jamming a clump of letters together. While I was separating them and swearing the door buzzer sounded.

It was Lou Freund again. I buzzed back to unlock the door and in seconds he came galloping up the stairs. He sailed past me into the room, blinking like crazy. He slapped a stack of Xerox pages down on the table.

"You got any more?"

"Uh, not quite yet. I'm just shaping the *Foxholme* story in my mind."

"Forget *Foxholme*. I need another hundred pages of what you just gave me and I can get you a contract."

"You don't mean Stein bought it?"

"Stein?" You would have thought he never heard the name before. "Who cares about Stein and his schlock paperbacks? What I got set up for you is a contract with Hotchner House and everything that goes with it—serialization, book clubs, softcover reprint. They want to make you a star."

I stared at the little agent, blinking right along with him. "I never did a hardcover book in my life."

"You never wrote anything like this before. Why didn't you tell me you had talent?"

I let that pass and told Lou I'd get right on it. When he was gone I sat down and read over the Xerox pages of what I had written the day before. What was it that made this different from anything else I had done? It was just people doing things and talking and moving in and out of each other's lives without bathos or melodrama, yet something came through. They say a writer is a poor judge of his own work, but all at once I knew what was different about this piece of writing. After fifteen years of inventing characters and making up stories, I had finally written something real. Every word on those hundred pages was honest and good and true. After fifteen years of sweating for peanuts, I had it made.

I positioned myself in front of the loaner and flexed my fingers. My whole life was going to be dif-

ferent after today. No more Stein paperbacks with garish covers and sappy pseudonyms. No more cranking out cheapos like sausages for a piddling advance. From now on I would be a capital-A Author. A display in Brentano's window. Talk shows, autograph parties, a spread in *People*. Money.

The telephone rang. Al down at the shop had got his act together and fixed my electric. Another good omen. I would start my new career on my own typewriter. I told Al I'd be right down to pick it up.

Two days later I was standing beside Lou Freund's desk while he flipped through the new pages. "You're kidding me, aren't you?" he said. "You're making some kind of bizarre joke."

"I don't understand."

He gave a backhand flip to the sheaf of pages in front of him. "This ... this *dreck!* Cardboard people, hackneyed plot, dialogue out of comic books. Where is the beauty? The sensitivity? The *truth*, for God's sake?"

"It's the same stuff you loved the other day."

"Like hell it is. This is ... something for Jerry Stein. Tops."

By now you will be way ahead of me, but I had a lot on my mind and didn't figure out until that moment what had happened. Not *how* it happened, but that didn't matter. I just knew I had to get the loaner back.

Al gave me a funny look when I dashed into the shop and croaked, "The machine you loaned me the other day when mine was being fixed. You remember it?"

"Sure. Big old dinosaur. They don't make 'em anymore."

"I want to buy it."

"Now if that don't beat all."

"What do you mean?"

"For years I've got that rusty old thing on a shelf in the back room. This week I run out of loaners and have to palm it off on two customers. And damn if both of you don't want to buy the sumbitch."

"Both?"

"Yeah. Right after you bring it back I send it out again with some kid from the Village. Couple hours later he's back, says he'll give me twenty bucks for it and throw in his old machine."

"You let him have it?"

"Hell yes. That piece of junk wasn't worth ten."

"This kid from the Village. Do you remember his name?"

"Nah. Just another would-be writer. Does it matter?"

No, it didn't matter. We would all know the kid's name soon enough. **17**





# CHAMELEON

by Hal Hill

ONE WAS A HIPPIE, THE OTHER A GOOD OLD BOY—  
BUT THEY SHARED A RATHER STRANGE SECRET.

**I**n the desert the margins of existence shift without warning. Within minutes, fleecy gray clouds can gather in the postcard-blue sky and blacken into thunderheads, sending great sheets of rain over the fast-draining sand. Then the spiny and succulent plants, which, moments before, were more dead than alive, get drunk on rainwater and put out blossoms big as catchers' mitts and colorful as Mardi Gras masks, some flowering and withering in a single night.

It was Wednesday afternoon in the Mojave Desert, along a stretch of highway between Boron

and Baker, California, and for the hundred-odd miles the tacky asphalt was nearly empty, save for a charcoal and gray luxury car sporting elegantly straight lines and enough chrome to anchor a blimp. The huge Detroit engine droned like gentle thunder across a land becalmed by the hundred-and-ten-degree heat. A sticker on the rear bumper spelled out *America* in wavy red-white-and-blue script.

In the driver's seat, Uke Kasmee rested in the bronzy tuck 'n' roll of hand-tooled leather. His left wrist lay on top of the steering wheel, hand dangling on the other side. A can of beer stuck in an insulating

**"We found a set  
of footprints  
leading toward  
the highway.  
I'd advise all  
your listeners  
on the road between  
Boron and Baker  
to be especially wary  
of hitchhikers."**

sleeve of styrofoam rested firmly between his heavy thighs. His pale green eyes shifted restlessly from the monotony of the shimmering blacktop to the monotony of the thrifty desert landscape. A wild muff of electric curls ringed Uke's bare pate, and his nose was a little longer than most people prefer; in fact, he was a roly-poly ringer for Larry of the Three Stooges.

Uke had the radio turned up loud, and "Rocky Mountain High" shrieked through the open windows. The windows were down because the air conditioner was off, since any extra load strapped onto the massive meat 'n' potatoes engine might cause it to nova.

Halfway through the song the DJ interrupted with his most serious voice. "Ladies and gentlemen, within the last hour no less than fifty people have called in sightings of what appear to be the same Unidentified Flying Object. Most observers also reported seeing the object fall. That's right, a UFO has been spotted in the central Mojave, and KKBK's mobile 'copter crew is on its way now to look over the crash area indicated by the reported sightings. Stay tuned to KKBK for news as it happens."

"Rocky Mountain High" came back on.

Dry cold spread through Uke's chest and stomach, and his neck and shoulder muscles tensed. In his brain, nerve impulses knocked at the door of a ten-year-old memory, but Uke gritted his mind and blocked the potent recollection with rhapsodic visions of flag, country, and, most of all, duty. There was something about spaceships and spacemen that scared the shit out of Uke Kasmear, and he was determined not to remember why. He reflected vacuously for a moment—this is how Uke Kasmear thought—and it came to him that other-worlders were just plain outsiders, illegals with no right to be on Earth.

Uke gripped the styrofoam beer-holder and downed what was left in the can. He belched, nodded reflexively, and his potbellied chin disappeared into a thick neck. The empty went into a sack in the back seat; a fresh one was fished from a cooler on the floorboard behind him and loaded into the sleeve. Uke had a moderate drinking problem, but didn't

notice because most of his friends had moderate drinking problems. His awareness drifted back to the calm dry of the desert.

Within ten miles, Uke spotted something alongside the road. At first it was only a blob flickering in rising waves of heat, but soon he could make out the shape of a car. Closer, he could see that it was a Volkswagen squareback; its hood up, and a hot gray plume of steam was hovering like an evil genie above it. Uke pulled to a halt along the shoulder and watched a man approach from the far side of the prostrate machine.

A hippie. Uke didn't like hippies, and his friends didn't like hippies, and vice versa.

Before he knew it, the tall stranger was hovering in the window. His hair was a glossy black A-bomb of tight curls mushrooming eight to ten inches from his scalp. The face was long and ruddy dark, with Rasputin-deep eyes brooding beneath caterpillar-thick eyebrows. Across a straight nose rested a pair of silver-plated wire-rimmed glasses.

A part of Uke knew damned well what to do: Peel Out. Peel out in the desert grit and leave this stringy, tweaky idealist—or maybe, worse yet, violent radical bastard—sucking sand. But in spite of his worst sentiments, Uke knew he couldn't leave anyone stranded in the desert.

"Car trouble?" he asked, giving voice to the obvious.

"Threw a rod," came the even reply. The hippie smiled a V-shaped smile so cheerful it made throwing a rod seem like hooking a prize trout. Uke didn't like the smile because it seemed to level all things good and bad to "all things." Didn't like it because it was a smile that took no stand and was not a member of the Elks, the Fellowship, or the home team.

"Hop in," said Uke. "Where you goin'?"

"Quite a ways eventually, but a lift to the next town would be fine for a start." He got in and extended a fine-boned hand. "My name is Carlos Trephin." Woven rattan sandals covered his feet. He wore simple white cotton pants and a blue and orange Hawaiian shirt decorated with hula girls and conch shells.

Uke gave him a dead-fish handshake and told him what he told everyone upon introduction: who he was and what he was doing. "I'm Uke Kasmear, headed for a citrus growers' convention in Las Vegas. I'm from California, got about two hundred acres of oranges and grapefruit in Fresno." Uke stopped and pushed in the cigarette lighter. He popped the pearlescent snap on the pocket flap of his gray and silver cowboy shirt, pulled out a cigarette, and lit it. He wanted people to make no mistake about who he was. He hit the ignition, wheeled the great smorgasbord of a car back onto the highway, and set the cruise

control. "Where you from?" Uke asked, without turning his head.

Carlos Trephin shrugged his way into a limp smile and flung an arm out the window to indicate the desert, the mystically straight skyline, maybe even the *dharma* body of the Buddha. "I'm from here, there," he said, his nimble shoulders dancing from right to left as he spoke. "Not really a home like you have in . . . ?"

"Fresno."

Finding little or nothing in common, both men fell silent. Joshua trees began to appear alongside the road. In twos and threes they came, then clumps, then in stands numbering close to a hundred. The trunks and branches of the tall yuccas were thick and shaggy with a gray thatch of spear-shaped dead leaves. Only the branch tips sported proof of life: crowns of fleshy green spikes. To Uke the trees looked abstract, nonsensical, and bore little resemblance to the childish round and leafy orange trees that grew in his orchards.

"Born to Be Wild" pulsed from the radio as the DJ cut in for the second time. "Ladies and gentlemen, an update on the UFO sightings reported on earlier. Our news crew first found an ebony-colored cylinder of metallic construction some forty feet long and fifteen feet in diameter. What they found after that defies retelling. The following is the report as taped and delivered by KKBK's affiliate television news anchorwoman, Sarah Cronard."

"This is Sarah Cronard," came the retransmission. "In addition to the craft reported on a few minutes ago . . . we found a body here—the body of a roughly forty-year-old, six-foot male Caucasian. The medic that accompanied us felt for a pulse, tried some emergency procedures, and, shortly afterward, pronounced the man dead." She stopped to release a short, jagged laugh. "You are not going to believe this," she continued. "There are three of us here: myself, the pilot, and the medic. Our focal point is the body lying at our feet, but—and I know this sounds insane—the body at our feet isn't the same one we found less than five minutes ago. It changed, and we watched it. Perhaps the creature could maintain the illusion of humanity only so long as it lived. The being that has now taken shape is unlike any outside myth or imagination. The skull is almost twice human size, and the head is totally bald. Ears are flat against the scalp. The eyes are slits and the mouth a seam. Thousands of geometrically intersecting lines are incised like perfectly straight wrinkles over every square inch of the pale skin, giving it a beaded aspect. A lime green tunic covers the torso and legs, but the arms, feet, and hands are bare and appear amazingly human, except for the intricately textured skin.

"Within fifty feet of the body and the cylinder, we also found a disturbed area of ground, and from it

a set of footprints leading toward the highway. I'd advise all your listeners on the road between Boron and Baker to be especially wary of hitchhikers until this is checked out. We plan to get back into the helicopter and try to follow the tracks from the air, and I will file an additional report at that time."

The DJ's voice returned. "Moments later government officials and a local National Guard unit converged on the area and escorted Sarah Cronard and her crew to a debriefing session, but not before she delivered that incredible report to all you KKBK listeners. Stay tuned for the latest on the UFO as it happens." The jock put on an early sixties hit called "The Purple People Eater" to mark the occasion.

Uke found the volume knob and turned it down. Suspicion and fear wrestled, then clenched in his mind. He'd been driving the stretch of highway indicated by the broadcast, he knew that. He measured his rider out of the corner of his eye. Carlos Trephin remained silent; not a word or twitch to indicate he'd heard the startling news. The late afternoon was beginning to cool, but Uke broke into a fresh sweat.

A murky flash of memory, a jumbled welling-up of the lines, sounds, and colors that make an image jolted him, but he fought the recollection as if it were an attack of nausea. For a second a visage flickered in his mind, a face crisscrossed by lines and distinguished by eyes and mouth that were little more than suggestions of features. It was the likeness of a being that would have put an end to him—he knew that, still believed it. Thoughts and pictures of his ranch, friends, barbecues, and nickel-ante poker parties set against the backdrop of Old Glory filled his consciousness, and the raggedly potent memory faded, dimmed by the glorious myth of the present.

Trephin still hadn't spoken. Didn't he care that aliens might have landed? Uke wondered. But Carlos wasn't a hitchhiker; his car had broken down, thrown a rod. Uke pictured the decrepit auto, hood up and a hissing V of steam . . .

A surge of recognition, of insight, brought Uke's spine straight against the seat back. "What did you say was wrong with your car?" he asked a little too eagerly, as if he was yelling "Bingo!"

"Threw a rod," Carlos said blankly.

Uke turned his barely green eyes on him. "Where'd it throw it?" he asked, without a fleck of humor.

"I don't know," Carlos answered. He still stared out the windshield, leaving only a dispassionate profile for Uke to scrutinize.

"Must've forgotten to put water in the radiator, huh?" Uke fished.

"Must've" Carlos agreed dully. "Sure, you saw it. The thing overheated, radiator blew."

"Aha!" Uke slammed his palm on the dash.

"You don't put water in a Volkswagen. There's no damned radiator!" he finished with a bark of delight.

For a heady moment he was agloat with triumph; then the sudden realization that his detecting was leading him deeper and deeper into bizarre waters stole the gleam from his smile. A part of him pleaded for silence, for zero more questions and a short, uneventful passage to the next town. But he had already tipped his hand.

"How do you explain about the steam?" Uke asked flatly.

Carlos turned to face him. His mouth formed a sharp, devil's smile, and he loosed a laugh that was half yodel. "Easy enough," he said. "The car was an illusion—and an imperfect one, I'm afraid."

Uke's face assumed a limp gape. For the first time he noticed that unsightly patches of scalp were showing through Trephin's once Brillo-thick curls. He turned his eyes back to the road and kept them there.

In the seat next to him a transformation was occurring: ears were flattening; eyes and mouth were thinning; skin was beginning to bead and pattern—and Uke Kasmeer was doing his manic best to ignore it.

Carlos Trephin, the erstwhile human, spoke once more, his tone delicate and concerned. "You see, I didn't know that the conveyance—the 'Volkswagen'—didn't take water and had no radiator. I do not know what a radiator is. I only monitored the exterior of the machine so that I might be able to will the illusion, but I now understand that I chose an atypical vehicle. Through my will I create an illusion, but it must be sustained jointly through my effort and the believing eyes of the beholders. Such was the case with my human appearance. Even moments ago, as your suspicions began to take root, my aspect began to change for you."

Uke struggled to keep his brain thumbtacked to the road and the dry quiet of the sand, but Trephin's voice was hypnotic, words rising and falling in perfectly counterpointed tremolos that flowed into one smooth tone. Uke turned his head, twitched, and the opulent carriage swerved on the blacktop.

Nothing remained of the rangy fellow he'd picked up. This creature wore a simple green tunic and had geometrically grained skin, no visible hair, and a head the size of a bloated Persian melon.

Uke felt giddy, frantic, overwhelmed by the sheer electric scariness of being trapped in a fast-moving car with an alien. Jamming the brake, he skidded to a halt along the gritty shoulder of the highway. He punched open the door, spilling beer in his crotch, and ran as fast as he could waddle toward the open desert.

With his practically human hands the alien opened the door, then got out and stood by the car.

The twiglike mouth turned up at the corners, forming a thin but surprisingly warm smile. "There's nowhere to go out there, and the road is empty for miles," said the alien, whose name was in fact Trephin.

Uke pulled up next to the black-tipped spines of a blue agave. The form-fitting weave of his polyester pants twitched with exertion. He shut his eyes and waited for a blast in the back: final judgment of a court convened in another star system, and of a jury that had never heard "The Star-Spangled Banner," never eaten a hot dog with mustard, onions, and chile. It wasn't justice, Uke was certain of that. The alien, that other alien, had given him no choice. *It was him or me, me or him*, Uke thought.

"I'm not here to harm you," came Trephin's chamois-smooth voice. "Come on back and let's talk." Again he flashed his pipe-cleaner smile, then leaned his slight weight against the car. "It's a good feeling you have about this world, this country," he said. He gestured skyward with a quite human finger. "But where I come from, the space between the inhabited planets has diminished, due to advanced ion drive. My 'world' is actually a network of communicating solar systems, systems that have traded and existed together for millennia."

Uke's most immediate fear relaxed; he was still alive. Reserved indignation filled the space vacated by the fear. He turned, took three short steps in the crusty sand, and said firmly, "What in the *hell* are you talking about?" His hands moved in and out as if tied to an invisible accordion. "I grow god-damned oranges and grapefruit, that's all!"

Calmly, Trephin continued. It seemed important to him that Uke hear the story. "Those thousand-odd worlds, including my birth planet, make up a federation of what are called 'evolved' worlds. 'Evolved' because their global societies have survived the critical nationalistic phase of development. As the younger planets of this local chunk of the galaxy wean themselves from vanity, fear, and prejudice, they are approached and welcomed by the federation. Then they are invited to share the knowledge and inventions of a thousand worlds, some a thousand times older than their own." He paused so that Uke could consider all this.

It was becoming increasingly difficult for Uke Kasmeer to think straight. He shuffled listlessly back to the car, eyes on the ground in front of him, and sat down in the driver's seat. He sat sideways, staring at a haggard stand of Joshua trees just over a hundred feet away. The new phone-pole smell of a lacy green creosote bush came on a late afternoon breeze. Evening was slipping in, and the desert's hot pie was cooling.





He was beginning to drift; the great continent of Reality was breaking up and Uke Kasmear with it. He knew he wouldn't be able to dispose of Trephin in the same manner he had the last one, knew he couldn't do it again.

"So why are you here?" he asked resignedly.

"To find someone."

Uke sagged in the soft leather. The stickum that had kept his mind in one piece for the last ten years was starting to loosen, and he was going insane trying not to notice. Then he broke. His gaze still fixed on the Joshua patch, he spoke in hollow, zombie tones. "You found who you're looking for. I killed him."

"Killed him ...?" Trephin repeated. His almost-eyes and nearly-mouth suggested bafflement for an instant, but his face quickly assumed the expression of a happy stick figure. "So you admit to killing the alien, do you? And I suppose you're ready to take what I've got for you now, like an American. Is that correct?"

Uke said nothing.

"I did not come for you, Uke Kasmear, and you have killed no one. Hear the rest of my story, and then we'll talk. The evolved worlds send Watchers to planets in the early stages of technological development. The Watcher supplies the impressions of a trained observer in the form of anecdotal reports, reports that will serve as future reference for those civilizations that survive and as a history of those that don't. As I did, the Watcher adopts the form of the observed species and lives among them for about six Earth-months. In many ways the Watcher is asked to *become* the creature he is monitoring—and therein lies the problem.

"Sometimes, while attempting to integrate the alien life-style, a Watcher may become affected, ill, forget who he is, and totally assimilate the observed life form. A bump on the head can trigger it, or a drug or a chemical. And there are Watchers that, for no apparent reason, float silently, unobtrusively over

the edge into the primal otherness of their cosmic ancestry. They become caught up in an atavistic reverie, enthralled by the hard-breathing emotions of an age so distant from their own species that they no longer have a conscious memory of it."

Uke's head dropped. "I'm an American, a citrus grower from California's Great Valley, and a member of the C.G.A.," he said mechanically, staring at his crotch.

Trephin walked around the open door and looked down at Uke's sucked-in form. He studied him like a surgeon studies an X ray. A thin red reptile's tongue parted the barely raised line of his lips. With his damned-near human hands he raised Uke's chin, forcing him to look him straight in his skinny eyes. "I'm here to talk back a Watcher, a Watcher from my own birth planet," Trephin said. Frail pink cobwebs formed in Uke's plump cheeks as the blood rushed to his head. "He thinks he is an Earthling now," Trephin continued, "an American, a citrus grower from California's Great Valley, and a member of the C.G.A. Also, his is not a simple case because he believes he's 'killed' the alien, a rare variant of the Watcher's syndrome."


Uke pushed Trephin aside, rose, and took a few hurried steps in the direction of the Joshuas that stood out clear and sharp as cubist sculpture against the setting sun. He stopped and stood perfectly still.

His own shape began to waver. Those lines that separated him from sky and ground, and which described the outer limits of his body, began to oscillate like radio waves. In those waves disappeared the pouting mouth, curly hair, dagger nose, and smooth skin. In their wake stood a being five feet tall, with bleached gila-monster skin and a big head full of no hair. The eyes and mouth seemed to have been drawn in one sideways slash of the pen. The cowboy shirt and stapress pants gave way to a simple green tunic, and from it stuck the incredibly human extremities.

Uke stared down at the spare green wraparound, his fingers searching his bland face for the bulges and curves that weren't there. "I am an American, a citrus grower," he said, profoundly confused. "How can this be happening? How can I be an alien?"

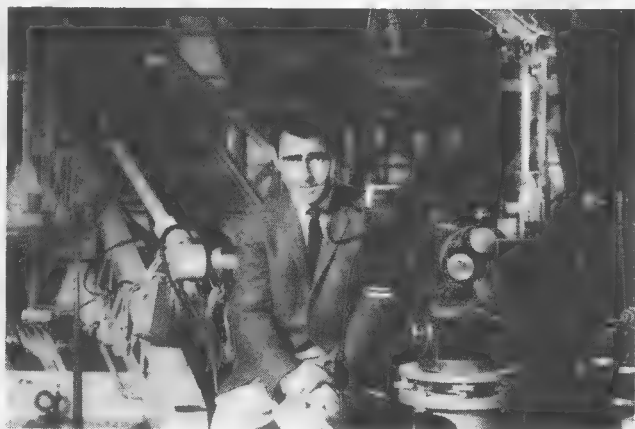
Trephin walked over to this fellow alien—whose name, in fact, was Kasmear—and put a hand on his thin shoulder. "I know it's hard now, Kasmear, but this is the first step back to yourself, first step out of a past you were never meant to know. I've signaled for my ship to reenter the atmosphere . . ."

"Ship? Ship crashed," Kasmear said, faintly remembering the radio report.

"Just on your radio, Kasmear. There was no broadcast, no crash, no other aliens on this world but you and I. Come, bid this dusty little world goodbye; leave the trials of humanity to the humans. I offer you the stars." 

# TV's Twilight Zone: Part Six

CONTINUING MARC SCOTT ZICREE'S  
SHOW-BY-SHOW GUIDE TO THE ENTIRE  
TWILIGHT ZONE TELEVISION SERIES,  
COMPLETE WITH ROD SERLING'S OPENING  
AND CLOSING NARRATIONS



*"There is a fifth dimension, beyond that which is known to man. It is a dimension as vast as space and as timeless as infinity. It is the middle ground between light and shadow, between science and superstition, and it lies between the pit of man's fears and the summit of his knowledge. It is an area which we call The Twilight Zone."*



## 57. THE PRIME MOVER

Written by Charles Beaumont  
Based on an unpublished story by George Clayton Johnson  
Producer: Buck Houghton  
Director: Richard L. Bare  
Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens  
No music credit

### Cast

Jimbo Cobb: Buddy Ebsen  
Ace Larsen: Dane Clark  
Kitty Cavanaugh: Christine White  
Big Phil Nolan: Nesdon Booth  
Sheila: Jane Burgess  
Trucker: Clancy Cooper  
Croupier: Joe Scott  
Hotel Manager: Robert Riordan  
Desk Clerk: William Keene

*"Portrait of a man who thinks and thereby gets things done. Mr. Jimbo Cobb might be called a prime mover, a talent which has to be seen to be believed. In just a moment, he'll show his friend and you how he keeps both feet on the ground—and his head in the Twilight Zone."*

When a car careens into some power lines, amiable Jimbo Cobb, co-owner of a cafe, is forced to reveal his psychokinetic power in order to save those within. Ace Larsen, his partner and a compulsive gambler, soon realizes that Jimbo is as adept at moving dice as he is at moving cars. Together with Ace's girlfriend Kitty, they set off for Las Vegas. In one evening Ace and Jimbo win \$200,000. But Ace isn't satisfied; he intends to keep on gambling. Disgusted by his behavior, Kitty angrily returns home. Ace takes up with Sheila, a flashy cigarette girl. The next morning he contacts high-roller Phil Nolan, a Chicago gangster, and invites him to

his hotel room to shoot dice. Ace wins every roll, thanks to Jimbo. But when Sheila enters and wraps herself around Ace, Jimbo tries to get him to stop. Ace ignores this and bets everything on a final roll. He loses. Jimbo explains that he "blew a fuse." They're poor again, but Ace's sense of balance is restored and he can laugh it off. He returns to the cafe and proposes to Kitty, who accepts. This so surprises Jimbo that he drops a broom. Making sure no one is looking, Jimbo uses his power—which he never really lost—to retrieve it.

*"Some people possess talent, others are possessed by it. When that happens, a talent becomes a curse. Jimbo Cobb knew, right from the beginning. But before Ace Larsen learned that simple truth, he had to take a short trip through the Twilight Zone."*



## 58. LONG DISTANCE CALL

Written by William Ideison and Charles Beaumont

Producer: Buck Houghton

Director: James Sheldon

Videotape—no director of photography

No music credit

### Cast

Billy Bayles: Billy Mumy

Grandma Bayles: Lili Darvas

Chris Bayles: Philip Abbott

Sylvia Bayles: Patricia Smith

Shirley: Jenny Maxwell

Dr. Unger: Henry Hunter

Mr. Peterson: Reid Hammond

Attendant: Lew Brown

With Bob McCord, Jim Turley, Jutta Parr

*"As must be obvious, this is a house hovered over by Mr. Death, that omnipresent player to the third and final act of every life. And it's been said, and probably rightfully so, that what follows this life is one of the unfathomable mysteries, an area of darkness which we the living reserve for the dead—or so it is said. For in a moment, a child will try to cross that bridge which separates light and shadow, and of course he must take the only known route, that indistinct highway through the region we call the Twilight Zone."*

For his fifth birthday, Grandma Bayles gives her grandson Billy—whom she possessively thinks of as "her son"—a toy telephone, then promptly takes sick and dies. Billy is despondent, but seems to recover while he talks animatedly into the toy. He claims Grandma is on the other end, that she is lonely and wants him to come visit. His parents dismiss this

as imagination, until Billy throws himself in front of a speeding car, claiming that "someone" told him to do it. His mother has a dread suspicion. Hearing Billy talking on the toy late that night, she grabs it from him—and hears breathing on the other end! Screaming that she broke his telephone, Billy runs from the house and tries to drown himself in the fish pond. A rescue team tries to resuscitate him. At his wits' end, Billy's father speaks into the toy telephone. He pleads with his mother for Billy's life. Billy begins to respond. Grandma has loosened her grip.

*"A toy telephone, an act of faith, a set of improbable circumstances, all combine to probe a mystery, to fathom a depth, to send a facet of light into a dark after-region, to be believed or disbelieved depending on your frame of reference. A fact or a fantasy, a substance or a shadow—but all of it very much a part of the Twilight Zone."*



## 59. A HUNDRED YARDS OVER THE RIM

Written by Rod Serling

Producer: Buck Houghton

Director: Buzz Kulik

Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens

Music: Fred Steiner

### Cast

Christian Horn: Cliff Robertson

Joe: John Crawford

Mary Lou: Evans Evans

Doctor: Ed Platt

Martha Horn: Miranda Jones

Sheriff: Robert L. McCord III

Charlie: John Astin

*"The year is 1847, the place is the territory of New Mexico, the people are a tiny handful of men and women with a dream. Eleven months ago, they started out from Ohio and headed west. Someone told them about a place called California, about a warm sun and a blue sky, about rich land and fresh air, and at this moment almost a year later they've seen nothing but cold, heat, exhaustion, hunger, and sickness. This man's name is Christian Horn. He has a dying eight-year-old son and a heartsick wife, and he's the only one remaining who has even a fragment of the dream left. Mr. Chris Horn, who's going over the top of a rim to look for water and sustenance and in a moment will move into the Twilight Zone."*

Scouting over the rim, Horn sees a modern highway. A truck thunders by. Horn throws himself down, and his rifle discharges into his arm. He stumbles to a diner run by Joe and

Mary Lou, a former nurse's aide. She treats his arm and gives him a bottle of penicillin pills. Horn finds all this totally inexplicable—until he spies a 1961 calendar. A doctor finds that Horn's "delusions" have a peculiar rationality, lent credence by his clothes, his gun, and the old-fashioned fillings in his teeth. Joe calls the sheriff, but Horn has seen in an encyclopedia that his son became a renowned physician. He understands the purpose of his journey through time. As the sheriff arrives, Horn runs back over the rim to 1847—armed with penicillin for his boy and the knowledge of nearby water and game. Left in 1961 is his rifle, rotting in the desert.

*"Mr. Christian Horn, one of the hardy breed of men who headed west during a time when there were no concrete highways or the solace of civilization. Mr. Christian Horn, family and party, heading west, after a brief detour through the Twilight Zone."*



## 60. THE RIP VAN WINKLE CAPER

Written by Rod Serling  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: Justus Addiss  
 Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens  
 No music credit

### Cast

Farwell: Oscar Beregi  
 DeCruz: Simon Oakland  
 Brooks: Lew Gallo  
 Erbie: John Mitchum  
 Man on Road: Wallace Rooney  
 Woman on Road: Shirley O'Hara  
 Brooks' Stunt Double: Robert L. McCord III  
 DeCruz's Stunt Double: Dave Armstrong

*"The time is now and the place is a mountain cave in Death Valley, U.S.A. In just a moment, these four men will utilize the services of a truck placed in cosmoline, loaded with a hot heist cooled off by a century of sleep, and then take a drive into the Twilight Zone."*

After robbing a bullion train bound from Fort Knox to California, four thieves stow their million dollars' worth of gold bricks in a cave. Then they climb into glass cases, where a gas invented by Farwell will keep them in suspended animation for the next hundred years. All but one—who has been killed by a falling rock—awake a hundred years later free from all possible pursuit. They soon find, though, that they have not escaped their own greed. DeCruz uses the truck to kill Brooks. But then the truck goes out of control and is wrecked. DeCruz and Farwell must walk through the desert to the

nearest town, carrying as much gold as they can. Farwell quickly becomes exhausted. He loses his canteen, and DeCruz forces him to pay one gold bar for each sip of water. When the price goes up to two bars, Farwell kills DeCruz. Farwell trudges along the highway weighted down by the gold. Finally, he collapses. A futuristic car drives up. Farwell offers his gold to the couple inside in exchange for a drink of water and a drive into town, but he is already too far gone. He dies—never knowing that years earlier a way of manufacturing gold was found. His precious loot is utterly worthless.

*"The last of four Rip Van Winkles who all died precisely the way they lived, chasing an idol across the sand to wind up bleached dry in the hot sun as so much desert flotsam, worthless as the gold bullion they built a shrine to. Tonight's lesson . . . in the Twilight Zone."*



## 61. THE SILENCE

Written by Rod Serling  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: Boris Sagal  
 Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens  
 No music credit

### Cast

Col. Archie Taylor: Franchot Tone  
 Jamie Tennyson: Liam Sullivan  
 George Alfred: Jonathan Harris  
 Franklin: Cyril Delevanti  
 1st Man: Everett Glass  
 2nd Man: Felix Locher  
 3rd Man: John Holland

*"The note that this man is carrying across a club room is in the form of a proposed wager, but it's the kind of wager that comes without precedent. It stands alone in the annals of bet-making as the strangest game of chance ever offered by one man to another. In just a moment, we'll see the terms of the wager and what young Mr. Tennyson does about it. And in the process, we'll witness all parties spin a wheel of chance in a very bizarre casino called the Twilight Zone."*

Archie Taylor wants only to enjoy peace and quiet at his men's club, but this is made impossible by the incessant chatter of fellow member Jamie Tennyson. Taylor offers Tennyson a wager: if Tennyson can remain silent for a year, he will pay him half a million dollars. He will be housed in the club's basement. Hopelessly in debt, Tennyson reluctantly agrees. As the weeks roll by, it becomes clear that Tennyson is

determined to win. Taylor uses every trick he can think of to get Tennyson to speak. Finally, the year is over. Tennyson puts out a hand for his winnings. Taylor reveals that he lost his fortune years before, that he never had any intention of paying off the bet. Tennyson is devastated by this news, but remains silent. The truth becomes horribly clear when he hands a note to Taylor. It reads: "I knew I would not be able to keep my part of the bargain, so one year ago I had the nerves to my vocal cords severed!"

*"Mr. Jamie Tennyson, who almost won a bet, but who discovered somewhat belatedly that gambling can be a most unproductive pursuit, even with loaded dice, marked cards, or in his case some severed vocal cords. For somewhere beyond him a wheel was turned and his number came up black thirteen. If you don't believe it, ask the croupier, the very special one who handles roulette—in the Twilight Zone."*





## 62. SHADOW PLAY

Written by Charles Beaumont  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: John Brahm  
 Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens  
 No music credit

### Cast

Adam Grant: Dennis Weaver  
 Henry Ritchie: Harry Townes  
 Paul Carson: Wright King  
 Jiggs: William Edmondson  
 Carol Ritchie: Anne Barton  
 Coley: Bernie Hamilton  
 Phillips: Tommy Nello  
 Priest: Mack Williams  
 Judge: Gene Roth  
 With Jack Hyde, Howard Culver,  
 John Close

*"Adam Grant, a nondescript kind of man found guilty of murder and sentenced to the electric chair. Like every other criminal caught in the wheels of justice, he's scared, right down to the marrow of his bones. But it isn't prison that scares him, the long, silent nights of waiting, the slow walk to the little room, or even death itself. It's something else that holds Adam Grant in the hot, sweaty grip of fear, something worse than any punishment this world has to offer, something found only in the Twilight Zone."*

Grant is sure the world is his recurring nightmare. Ritchie the D.A., rejects this, but Carson, a newspaper editor, fears that when Grant is electrocuted, all of them will cease to exist. Carson convinces Ritchie to visit Grant in his cell, but he is not swayed by the fact that Grant is expecting him, nor by his ability to lip-sync Ritchie's every word. As midnight draws near,

Carson pleads with Ritchie to call the governor for a stay of execution. But it is too late. As the switch is pulled on Grant, Ritchie and Carson disappear—as does everything else in their world. For a moment, all is blackness, then suddenly Grant is back in the courtroom being sentenced. Some of the characters are different, but the scenario is the same—and the nightmare is starting over.

*"We know that a dream can be real, but who ever thought that reality could be a dream? We exist, of course, but how, in what way? As we believe, as flesh-and-blood human beings, or are we simply parts of someone's feverish, complicated nightmare? Think about it, and then ask yourself, do you live here, in this country, in this world, or do you live instead . . . in the Twilight Zone."*



## 63. THE MIND AND THE MATTER

Written by Rod Serling  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: Buzz Kulik  
 Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens  
 No music credit

### Cast

Archibald Beechcroft: Shelley Berman  
 Henry: Jack Grinnage  
 Rogers: Chet Stratton  
 Landlady: Jeane Wood

*"A brief if frenetic introduction to Mr. Archibald Beechcroft, a child of the twentieth century, a product of the population explosion, and one of the inheritors of the legacy of progress . . . Mr. Beechcroft again. This time, act two of his daily battle for survival. And in just a moment, our hero will begin his personal one-man rebellion against the mechanics of his age, and to do so he will enlist certain aids available only in the Twilight Zone."*

Beechcroft detests people, but he feels he has no alternative but to suffer the crowds and the noise—until an office boy, to make up for spilling coffee on his suit, gives him a book on mind power. After reading this, Beechcroft is convinced that with concentration he can do anything, and he proves this by making his landlady disappear, followed by everybody else in the world! The next day, he finds his office barren, quiet—and lonely.

Suddenly, he gets a brainstorm: he'll repopulate the world with men and women who look, act, and sound exactly like him. But when he does this he finds to his dismay that these people are relentlessly sour, snappish, and self-centered. "A lot of me is just as bad as a lot of them," he concedes. Perhaps a little more forgiving of the faults of others, he returns things to the way they were originally, determined never to play God again.

*"Mr. Archibald Beechcroft, a child of the twentieth century, who has found out through trial and error—and mostly error—that with all its faults it may well be that this is the best of all possible worlds. People notwithstanding, it has much to offer. Tonight's case in point . . . in the Twilight Zone."*



#### 64. WILL THE REAL MARTIAN PLEASE STAND UP

Written by Rod Serling  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: Montgomery Pittman  
 Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens  
 No music credit  
 Makeup by William Tuttle  
**Cast**  
 Ross: John Hoyt  
 Haley: Barney Phillips  
 Avery: Jack Elam  
 Trooper Dan Perry: Morgan Jones  
 Trooper Bill Padgett: John Archer  
 Olmstead: Bill Kendis  
 Ethel McConnell: Jean Willes  
 With Bill Erwin, Gertrude Flynn,  
 Ron Kipling, Jill Ellis

*"Wintry February night, the present. Order of events: a phone call from a frightened woman notating the arrival of an unidentified flying object, and the checkout you've just witnessed with two state troopers verifying the event, but with nothing more enlightening to add beyond evidence of some tracks leading across the highway to a diner. You've heard of trying to find a needle in a haystack? Well, stay with us now and you'll be part of an investigating team whose mission is not to find that proverbial needle, no; their task is even harder. They've got to find a Martian in a diner, and in just a moment you'll search with them, because you've just landed in the Twilight Zone."*

Troopers follow tracks to a diner. In it are a soda jerk, a bus driver, and seven passengers. But the driver is certain only six people boarded his bus. The suspects: a businessman, a dancer, and an eccentric old man.

When the county engineer declares a decaying bridge safe, the bus departs. A little later, the businessman returns. The bridge has collapsed and he is the only survivor. The phone call was an illusion: he is the Martian, advance scout of an invasion force. Smugly, he reveals three arms. But the soda jerk has a surprise for him: he's a Venusian, and his invasion force has intercepted the Martian fleet. Grinning, he removes his cap, revealing a third eye.

*"Incident on a small island, to be believed or disbelieved. However, if a sour-faced dandy named Ross or a big, good-natured counterman who handles a spatula as if he'd been born with one in his mouth, if either of these two entities walks onto your premises, you'd better hold their hands—all three of them—or check the color of their eyes—all three of them. The gentlemen in question might try to pull you into . . . the Twilight Zone."*



#### 65. THE OBSOLETE MAN

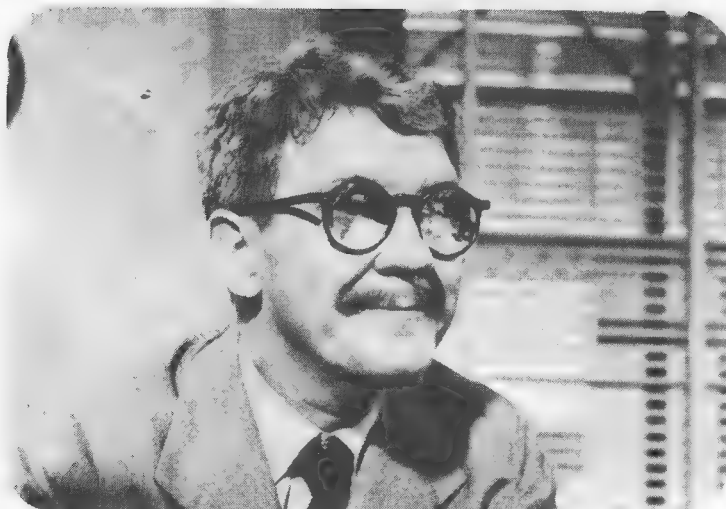
Written by Rod Serling  
 Producer: Buck Houghton  
 Director: Elliot Silverstein  
 Dir. of Photography: George T. Clemens  
 No music credit  
**Cast**  
 Romney Wordsworth: Burgess Meredith  
 Chancellor: Fritz Weaver  
 Subaltern: Joseph Elic  
 Guard: Harry Fleer  
 1st Man: Barry Brooks  
 2nd Man: Harold Innocent  
 Woman: Jane Romeyn

*"You walk into this room at your own risk, because it leads to the future, not a future that will be but one that might be. This is not a new world, it is simply an extension of what began in the old one. It has patterned itself after every dictator who has ever planted the ripping imprint of a boot on the pages of history since the beginning of time. It has refinements, technological advances, and a more sophisticated approach to the destruction of human freedom. But like every one of the superstates that preceded it, it has one iron rule: logic is an enemy and truth is a menace . . . This is Mr. Romney Wordsworth, in his last forty-eight hours on Earth. He's a citizen of the State but will soon have to be eliminated, because he's built out of flesh and because he has a mind. Mr. Romney Wordsworth, who will draw his last breaths in the Twilight Zone."*

Wordsworth is granted three requests: that only his assassin know the method of his death, that he die

at midnight the next day, and that he have an audience. He invites the Chancellor to his room and reveals that he has chosen to be killed by a bomb set to explode at twelve. He locks the Chancellor in. A tv camera will broadcast all that transpires—and Wordsworth will prove which is stronger, the will of the State or that of the individual. The Chancellor cries out, "In the name of God, let me out!" Wordsworth hands him the key and the Chancellor runs. The bomb explodes and Wordsworth is killed. When the Chancellor returns to his court, he has been judged obsolete.

*"The Chancellor—the late Chancellor—was only partly correct. He was obsolete. But so was the State, the entity he worshiped. Any state, any entity, any ideology that fails to recognize the worth, the dignity, the rights of man, that state is obsolete. A case to be filed under 'M' for Mankind . . . in the Twilight Zone."* **TV**



# Time Enough at Last

by Rod Serling

THE ORIGINAL  
TELEVISION SCRIPT  
FIRST AIRED ON CBS-TV  
NOVEMBER 20, 1959

## T Z C L A S S I C T E L E P L A Y

### 1. STANDARD OPENING

Shot of the sky . . . the various nebulae and planet bodies stand out in sharp, sparkling relief. The CAMERA has begun to PAN DOWN until it passes the horizon and is flush on the OPENING SHOT OF THE PLAY.

### 2. INT. SMALL BANK DAY LONG ANGLE SHOT LOOKING UP

Through high windows following the beams of sunlight until we're looking eye level across the bank from the front door. Three tellers' windows on the left, bank officers' desks on the right, safe deposit vaults at the far end opposite the front door, flanking the president's office. CAMERA PANS left until we're shooting toward the first teller's window with the little sign underneath the barred partition which reads: "Henry Bemis, Teller." DOLLY IN CLOSER until we're shooting over the partition down on him. He's a rotund, squat, plain-faced little man in his fifties with enormously thick glasses which are obviously an integral part of his living. At this moment he's

making change for a customer, but on his lap is a big heavy book open about halfway. As he counts out the change he looks down at the book, chuckles, wets his fingers to separate bills, then wets them again to turn the page of the book. He finishes counting out the money.

BEMIS

Mrs. Chesters, have you ever read David Copperfield?

WOMAN

(grumpily)

How's that?

BEMIS

A wonderful book! Here's this poor little fella whose father has passed on and his mother has married a miserable man named Murdstone. And Murdstone has this sister Jane —

WOMAN

(looks up from the change he's given her to glare at him)

Mr. Bemis! You short-changed me again. You owe me one more dollar. See? There's twenty-four here. I should have twenty-five.

Bemis peers myopically over

toward the money, sorts it, then realizes his mistake.

BEMIS

I'm terribly sorry. I thought there were five ones there and there are only four.

(he hands her another bill)

I'm really sorry, Mrs. Chesters. (then smiling)

There's another character in the story named Macawber. Mr. Macawber. He's always being taken to debtors' prison —

The woman grunts again, turns her back and starts to walk away.

BEMIS

(calls after her)

There's a wonderful woman in it too named Peggotty. She's David's nurse —

### 3. MED. CLOSE SHOT BEMIS

He sighs deeply, closes the cage drawer, goes back to poring over the book.

### 4. MED. CLOSE SHOT PAGE OF BOOK

As seen from over his shoulder. A shadow crosses it. Bemis switches the book so that it's back in the light. Again the shadow crosses it. This time Bemis looks up.

**6. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING**

**UP TOWARD MR. CARSVILLE'S FACE**

This is the president of the bank, a little martinet of a man with a perpetually suspicious glint in his eye. Fastidious, insufferably correct, and about as warm as an ice tray.

**6. TWO SHOT CARSVILLE AND BEMIS**

**CARSVILLE**  
I wonder if I might see you in my office, Mr. Bemis?

**BEMIS**  
(gulp)  
Why... why certainly, Mr. Carsville.

(he rises, smiles diffidently, gulps again)  
I don't suppose you ever read David Copperfield, did you, Mr. Carsville?

**CARSVILLE**  
(jolly)  
No, Mr. Bemis, I have not! Now if you'll be good enough to accompany me?

Bemis, with trepidation, puts down the book and starts to follow the bank president past the other two tellers, who immediately busy themselves at their jobs.

**7. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN AT BEMIS**

As he walks toward the office.

**NARRATOR'S VOICE**

The time is the day after tomorrow; the place is anywhere so long as it can accommodate a bank, a main street, and a library—along with a myopic little man named Henry Bemis who has only one passion in life and that is to read.

(a pause)

Mr. Henry Bemis—conspired against by brow-beaters and hen-peckers and by clocks whose hands wage a disappearingly at him and always disallow the moments he'd love to use to read what he would.

(a pause)

In a moment from now, however, Mr. Bemis will have his chance to read in a world much different than the one he knows—a world without clocks or bank presidents; a world for that matter, without anyone!

**8. MED. CLOSE SHOT DOOR TO PRESIDENT'S OFFICE**

As the two men arrive, Carsville opens the door, motions Bemis in, then squares his small shoulders, goes in behind him, and slams the door.

CUT TO BLACK:

**OPENING BILLBOARD FIRST COMMERCIAL**

**FADE ON:**

**9. INT. CARSVILLE'S OFFICE DAY**

The bank president sits behind a giant, extravagantly neat desk where everything is in carefully placed piles. In front of him stands little Henry Bemis, his hands folded in front of him.

**CARSVILLE**  
Now, Mr. Bemis, I shall come to the point of our interview. I shall arrive via the following route which is namely: what constitutes an efficient member of this organization.

Viz—a bank teller who knows his job and performs it, i.e., an organization man who functions within an organization! You, Mr. Bemis do not function within the organization. You are neither an efficient bank teller nor a proficient employee. You are a reader, Mr. Bemis.

**BEMIS**

A reader, sir?

**CARSVILLE**

A reader. A reader of books. Of magazines. Periodicals. Newspapers. Pamphlets. Brochures. Catalogues. Advertisements. Tracts. Ad infinitum! When you're waiting on customers you have a book

In your lap. When you're making the daily tally sheets, one eye is on a printed page. I see you constantly going down into the vault downstairs during your lunch hour. Do you know how I became president of this bank, Mr. Bemis? I was a teller once myself, you know.

Thirty-seven years a teller, I'm proud to say. Became a bank president because I would spend my lunch hour in the following manner: Five minutes sandwich. Two minutes milk. One minute cookie. Fifty-two minutes spent learning of banking and finance. Practicing adding up figures. Subtracting. Dividing. Compounding interest. And after twenty-one years passing through the ranks—you know how I wound up?

**Bemis shakes his head miserably.**

**CARSVILLE**

I wound up as president of the bank.

(he drums his fingers on the desk)

Ullinatum, Mr. Bemis. You will henceforth devote your time to your job and forget reading—or you'll find yourself outdoors on a park bench reading from morning to night—for want of having a job! Do I make myself perfectly clear?

**BEMIS**

(nods humbly)

Yes, sir, you do. It's just that—

**CARSVILLE**

(impatiently)  
Just that what, Bemis? Make it quick and then get back to your cage.

**BEMIS**

(forlornly, softly)

It's just that... my wife doesn't allow me to read at home. When I come home at night and pick up the paper, she yanks it out of my hand. After dinner when I try to look at a magazine, she hides them. It's gotten so that... I find myself



trying to read the labels on condiment bottles on the dinner table. Now she won't even let me use catsup.

#### CARSVILLE

Unasked I give you my reaction to this. Your wife is an amazingly bright woman. I remember last November you spent the better part of the days reading campaign buttons on customer's lapels. You'll recall, Mr. Bemis, the young woman who took considerable offense at this and tried to hit you with the umbrella.

#### BEMIS

(unhappily)

I remember that very well, Mr. Carsville. She never gave me a chance to tell her that I was only looking at who she was voting for.

#### CARSVILLE

(rises and turns his back, folds his hands behind him)

Good day, Mr. Bemis.

#### BEMIS

(sighs)

Good day, Mr. Carsville.

#### 10. TRACK SHOT

As he turns and starts toward the door. He pauses momentarily by a table near the door that has some magazines on it. He tilts his head so that he can read the cover of one of the magazines.

#### 11. DIFFERENT ANGLE MR. CARSVILLE

Who looks over his shoulder, clears his throat warningly. Bemis hurriedly takes his eyes off the magazines, smiles a little sick, and then hurries out of the office.

DISSOLVE TO:

#### 12. INT. BEMIS LIVING ROOM DAY

SLOW PAN SHOT ACROSS THE ROOM, which is small, tidy, and antiseptically unattractive, as if furnished by a woman yoga whose basic tenet of living is self-denial. The CAMERA WINDS UP ITS PAN on a shot of Mr. Bemis sitting in the corner of the room with a

newspaper. His wife's voice pierces the quiet.

#### HELEN'S VOICE

Henry? HEN-RY?

Bemis puts the paper down and forces a smile.

#### BEMIS

Yes, dear, I'm in the living room.

#### 13. FULL SHOT THE ROOM

As Helen enters. This is a woman in severe clothes and severe shoes and a severe face. She strides purposefully over to Henry, back hands the paper out of his hands.

#### HELEN

Do you want more coffee or don't you?

#### BEMIS

(shakes his head)

No thank you, dear.

#### HELEN

Then tell me that and don't sneak off into the living room to bury yourself in newsprint! I think we've gone over this quite enough, Henry. I won't countenance a husband of mine sacrificing the art of conversation —

(she stops, staring at him)

All right! What's so funny?

#### BEMIS

Nothing dear. It's just that that sounded sort of funny. A husband of yours.

(smiles)

How many husbands have you had? I'm the only one.

#### HELEN

(throws the paper aside)

I would appreciate that not being rubbed in! We're playing cards tonight. I want you to change your shirt.

#### BEMIS

Cards?

#### HELEN

(challengingly, ready to pounce)

That's quite right — cards!

We're going over to the Phillips' house.

(a pause)

Well, Henry? Anything to say?

#### BEMIS

(looks up at her tiredly, takes off his glasses and puts them aside, rubs his eyes)

No, dear. Nothing to say. What time are we due there?

#### HELEN

In about fifteen minutes. That's why I want you to change your shirt. Try to look at least remotely respectable!

#### 14. MED. CLOSE SHOT HENRY

As with open and blind eyes he feels around for the glasses.

#### 15. CLOSE SHOT HELEN

As she watches him, just a suggestion of some strange and almost malevolent enjoyment of his disability.

#### 16. CLOSE SHOT HENRY'S HAND

As it gets close to the glasses.

#### 17. CLOSE SHOT HELEN'S HAND

As it moves them away.

#### 18. CLOSE SHOT HENRY

As he finally reaches them, picks them up, puts them on. He looks up smiling at Helen.

#### HENRY

I'll be ready, dear.

Helen stares at him again with an undisguised dislike. She whirls around and walks out of the room.

#### HELEN

(over her shoulder)

See that you are!

#### 19. FULL SHOT THE ROOM

As Henry rises, starts to walk out, suddenly stops, bites his lip in deep concentration, cranes his



neck to look off into the foyer and the distant dining room to make sure he's not being watched. Then he goes over almost on tiptoe to the corner of the room to a small end table, opens the drawer, feels deep into the back of the drawer, and takes out a small pocket book. We can see its cover which reads, "A Book of Modern Poetry." He looks at the cover and smiles, puts it under his coat, then starts to walk out of the living room.

## 20. FLASH SHOT HELEN

As he almost bumps into her. She stands towering over him like a prison guard.

## 21. TWO SHOT

HELEN (in a very soft voice)

HENRY?

BEMIS (forces a smile)

Yes, my dear?

HELEN

What have you got, Henry?

BEMIS

Got?

BEMIS

Why nothing, dear —

Helen reaches in almost gleefully to take out the small pocket book hidden in his coat.

HELEN

What's this, Henry?

BEMIS

That?

HELEN

(nods)

This.

BEMIS

That's odd. How did that get there?

HELEN

I could only hazard a guess. (she looks at the cover and reads)

"A Book of Modern Poetry."

(a pause)

Yours, Henry?

Bemis nods miserably

HELEN

Would you like to read me some,

Henry?

BEMIS

(his eyes go bright)

Read you some? Aloud? From

the book?

HELEN

Do you want to?

Bemis takes the book from her

proffered hand.

BEMIS

Why... why, Helen, I'd be

delighted to. This has lovely

things in it, really. There's one

or two from Longfellow, Edna St.

Vincent Millay, Robert Frost.

Carl Sandburg —

## 22. MED. CLOSE SHOT THE

### BOOK IN HIS HAND

As with shaking, excited fingers

he starts to open it.

## 23. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE

### SHOT FIRST PAGE

And then all the others as he

turns them. Each one has been

criss-crossed with a black pencil

so that none of the writing can be

seen. He turns page after page.

CAMERA PULLS BACK for a

MEDIUM SHOT of Bemis with his

striked white face under the

thick glasses.

Helen? Who did this?

HELEN

Who do you think did it, Henry?



You should thank me, really! A grown man who reads silly, ridiculous, nonsensical doggerel!

BEMIS

It isn't doggerel. There were

some beautiful things here —

HELEN

I say it's doggerel. I also say it's

a waste of time.

She grabs the book from him, rips

at it with her hands, tearing out

pages that flutter out. Bemis goes

down on his knees, grappling for

the pages.

BEMIS

Helen, please. Please, don't —

She continues to rip at the book

and the pages continue to flutter

down. His glasses slip off and once

again he's left groping in a world

without sight.

## 24. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING

### UP AT HELEN

Her face distorted with dislike.

PAN SHOT down to her foot which

is very close to the glasses. We can

see his hand nearly groping over

the floor looking for them.

## 25. CLOSE SHOT HER FOOT

### AGAIN

As it moves over to step on the

glasses.

## 26. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING

### UP AT HER FACE

Willful, purposeful, evil.



## 27. CLOSE SHOT THE FOOT

As it's about to come down on the glasses. Just at this moment Henry's hand finds them, retrieves them.

## 28. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN ON HIM

As he puts the glasses on and looks up at her.

## 29. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING DOWN AT HIM TIGHT ON HIS FACE HELEN'S P.O.V.

He rises very slowly, stares at the woman.

BEMIS

(in a low voice)

Why, Helen? Why do you do these things?

HELEN

Because I'm married to a fool.

BEMIS

There'll come a time, Helen.  
There'll come a moment  
when —

He leaves the rest unsaid.

HELEN

(challengingly, ugly)

When what, Henry?

BEMIS

When I'll be forced to pay you  
back for twenty years of  
indignities, and cruelties, and  
misery —

Helen throws back her head and laughs, a shrill, piercing, grating laugh which goes on for a moment then suddenly seems to die in her throat as she stares at the intense face of the little man in front of her and for the first time a look of

concern crosses her face which borders on fear. Bemis goes down and picks up the rest of the pages, crumples them up in his hand, carries them over to a waste basket, puts them in. Then he starts out the room.

HELEN

Henry —!

He stops but keeps his back to her.

HELEN

Are you going to change your shirt now? We've only got a few minutes.

Bemis slowly turns toward her.

BEMIS

I'm going to bed, Helen. I learned those poems by heart. I'm going to bed and say them to myself. And you can't vandalize what's inside my mind. You can't climb in there and pencil out some beautiful language.

He turns and goes out of the room.

DISSOLVE TO:

## 30. INT. BANK DAY CLOSE SHOT CLOCK ON WALL

Which is just striking noon. PAN SHOT down the wall to a LONG ANGLE SHOT of Bemis at his cage as he looks up at the clock, pulls down the cage window, puts out a sign which reads: "Next window please," takes a small lunch bag, pulls a book out from the back of a drawer, walks slowly past the cages over to the vault entrance.

## 31. MED. CLOSE SHOT VAULT ENTRANCE

A large, heavy sealed door that is partly opened. Bemis slips in behind.

## 32. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN STAIRWAY LEADING TO VAULT

As he very slowly walks down.

CUT TO:

## 33. INT. VAULT ROOM

Flanked and crowded by safe deposit boxes, et al. Bemis sits on the floor, adjusts his glasses, opens up the bag, starts to gnaw on a sandwich while he reads,

voraciously, delightedly, all-consumingly.

## 34.-37. DIFFERENT ANGLES BEMIS

As he eats and reads. First a small book, then a newspaper, then a pamphlet.

## 38. MED. CLOSE SHOT NEWSPAPER

That he's laid aside neatly at his feet. The headline stares up. It reads, " 'H Bomb would mean total destruction,' says scientist."

## 39. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING OVER BEMIS'S SHOULDER

Toward newspaper.

## 40. CLOSE SHOT BEMIS

As he takes out a pocket watch, looks at it, puts it alongside in view.

## 41. DIFFERENT ANGLE BEMIS

Looking toward him from the newspaper so that both the headline and Bemis's face are visible.

## 42. PAN SHOT ACROSS THE FLOOR

Over the newspaper toward the watch. At this moment there's a loud rumble that grows and grows and grows until suddenly it's an earsplitting, detonating, all-consuming, giant moment of thunder.

## 43. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT POCKET WATCH

As the glass over its face cracks.

## 44. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT NEWSPAPER

As suddenly dust and plaster start to drip on it.

## 45. CLOSE SHOT BEMIS

As his eyes beneath the thick glasses suddenly look up startled. The walls and floor start to shake. Cracks appear. Bemis slowly inches to his feet very alarmed now. He goes to the door and starts to open it. He wrenches it to get it open.

## 46. MED. LONG SHOT OVER HIS SHOULDER



corner looking around and over his shoulder up to the sky, past rubbish and debris, as he walks toward the camera. He suddenly stops dead, looking across at something.

**69. PAN SHOT - OVER THE RUBBLE**

To the remnants of a glass outdoor phone booth. About one pane of glass remains unscathed.

**70. DIFFERENT ANGLE BEMIS**

As he walks over to it. En route he sees its door lying off to one side. He slowly enters the booth and almost as if in a trance lifts up the receiver, dials a number. There's absolutely no sound in the receiver. He puts the receiver back on the hook, turns and stands framed in the entrance to the booth, looking out at the nothingness that surrounds him.

**71. MED. CLOSE SHOT**

As he touches a prisme on his head, looks down at his fingers.

**72. SHOT OVER HIS SHOULDER TOWARD PHONE BOOTH**

As suddenly the phone falls to the ground with a clatter of broken glass. An odd sound of a bell which is like a death knell.

**73. MED. SHOT BEMIS**

(very softly)  
They're all dead. They must be. Everybody's dead.  
(a pause as he thinks)  
Except me. I'm all right.  
(another pause)  
Why am I all right? I was right

Toward the open door and the foot of the stairway as a huge flash of light and noise blasts him back.

**47. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN ON FLOOR**

As Bemis lands head first back into the room, dust and plaster falling on him.

**48. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN AT HIM**

As he lies motionless on the floor.

FADE TO BLACK.  
END ACT ONE  
ACT TWO

**49. INT. VAULT HIGH HAT SHOT LOOKING ACROSS FLOOR**

At Bemis who awakens from unconsciousness, struggles to his hands and knees, touches his glasses, which hang askew off one ear, then rises blindly, groping, not completely with it yet.

**50. MOVING SHOT WITH HIM**

As he gets up on his feet, tumbles over to the now smashed open door, which hangs on half a hinge, walks up the debris- and dust-covered stairway.

**51. DIFFERENT ANGLE AS HE REACHES THE TOP**

Stands there looking out toward what should be the interior of the bank.

**52. REVERSE ANGLE BEMIS'S P.O.V**

This is the interior of the bank as seen through his myopic eyes, distorted, hazy, and completely out of focus.

**53. CLOSE SHOT BEMIS**

As with nervous trembling fingers he adjusts the glasses and puts them on.

**54. REVERSE ANGLE AGAIN BEMIS'S P.O.V**  
As seen just at the moment he

puts his glasses on. This is the interior of the room, smashed beyond recognition. A gaping hole in the wall, tellers' cages, desk, money, beams, everything lying around in smashed heaps.

**55. MOVING SHOT BEMIS**

As he picks his way over the rubble over toward the front door.

**56. DIFFERENT ANGLE LOOKING AT HIM**

As he comes out the front door and looks slowly from side to side.

**57-60. SERIES OF SHOTS DESTROYED BUILDINGS, SMASHED BEYOND RECOGNITION.**

**61. MED. CLOSE SHOT BEMIS**

As he takes a few steps across a concrete sidewalk and sits on what is left of a curb. He looks to one side.

**62. PAN SHOT ACROSS THE SIDEWALK**

To what is left of a newspaper stand. A torn and battered newspaper lies face up on the sidewalk, just a remnant of its headline remaining. It reads: "H Bomb"

**63-66. DIFFERENT ANGLES FLASH SHOTS OF THE HEADLINE**

**67. EXTREMELY CLOSE SHOT BEMIS**

As he buries his face in his hands. CAMERA PULLS BACK until it's shooting long on Bemis, a tiny, solitary figure of a man sitting in front of rubble.

**68. EXT. STREET BEMIS**  
DISSOLVE TO:

He comes out from behind a



in the middle of—  
(he stops abruptly)

The vault. I was down in the vault. That's why I'm alive — because I was down in the vault.

(another pause as he takes a step out of the booth)

The thing of it is, though . . . the thing of it is . . . I'm not at all sure I want to be alive.

DISSOLVE TO:

#### **74. INT. BANK LONG SHOT LOOKING DOWN**

Past the destroyed tellers' windows at Bemis as he walks the same route he's taken so many times toward Carsville's office. He pauses by his own cage, bends over, and picks out his sign, which is warped and bent. He stares down at it, then throws it aside.

#### **75. TRACK SHOT WITH HIM**

As he walks toward Carsville's office. He reaches the closed door, tries it, then pushes in on it and it gives way under his pressure to fall on the ground.

CUT TO:

#### **76. INT. CARSVILLE'S OFFICE**

Very little of it remains, except a section of the desk which has been thrown as if by some giant hand to a corner of the room to stand crazily on one end. Suddenly Bemis starts, as the sound of a voice is heard.

CARSVILLE'S VOICE

And so, ladies and gentlemen, members of the Interstate Banking Association, I can only tell you that an adherence to duty . . . a constant remembrance that a bank, like a political office, is a public trust . . . and a sense of loyalty and devotion to duty is what makes a bank great. These things are of the essence. These things are basic above all things. Just the qualities I've mentioned already.

There's a pause as Bemis takes a frightened, almost nightmarish, compelled walk over to the desk.

#### **77. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING OVER THE DESK**

There's a lifeless hand holding onto the microphone of a battery operated dictaphone.

#### **78. PAN SHOT OVER TO THE DICTAPHONE**

It still runs.

VOICE

That's my speech for the Thursday night banquet, Miss Jackson. Would you type that up in triplicate for me?

(then the voice suddenly takes on a kind of dead repetitious tone)

Would you type that up in triplicate for me? Would you type that up in triplicate for me? Would you type that up in triplicate for me?

#### **79. DIFFERENT ANGLE THE DICTAPHONE**

As it suddenly bursts apart.

#### **80. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING FROM BEHIND THE DESK**

Up toward Bemis's face as he closes his eyes at the horror of what he's looking at, stumbles backwards across the room and then out the door.

DISSOLVE TO:

#### **81. EXT. STREET SHADOW OF BEMIS**

As he walks. CAMERA PULLS BACK for shot of him as he steps up a row of concrete steps that lead to nothing except a yard full of debris.

CUT TO:

#### **82. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN AT HIS FEET**

As he bends over and extricates a mailbox torn in half. The name "Bemis" is on it. He stares at it very thoughtfully for a long moment, then looks up and around and illogically, wildly, calls out.

BEMIS

Helen? Helen, where are you?

He walks back down the steps, skirts them and walks over to a large hole.

CUT TO:

#### **83. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING FROM THE HOLE UP TOWARD HIM**

As once again he shudders at what he sees, then backs away.

DISSOLVE TO:

#### **84-87. SERIES OF WALKING SHOTS DIFFERENT ANGLES BEMIS'S FEET**

They pass signs on the ground which read, "Post Office," "Dime a Dance," "Bijou Theatre."

DISSOLVE TO:

#### **88. EXT. STREET DAY LONG SHOT LOOKING THROUGH THE FACADE OF WHAT WAS A GROCERY STORE**

Half of the sign remains on the remnant of the window. On the other side, on the high shelves laden with canned food, sits Henry Bemis, an open, half-eaten can of soup lies to one side, a can of beer to the other. He sits there, leaning against one of the counters, staring off at nothing. He reaches down to pull out his watch, pats for it, then realizes he doesn't have it. Then he smiles sadly.

BEMIS

Maybe I can pick up a new watch. Maybe I can find a jewelry store.

(then he looks up at the canned food)

I won't starve to death anyway. Lots of food. It'll last for years. For years and years. All the food I can eat. All the food and then some.

He takes a deep breath, puts his head back, closes his eyes, takes off his glasses, and then very slowly drops off to sleep.

DISSOLVE TO:

#### **89. EXT. DESTROYED STREET NIGHT PAN SHOT DOWN SIDEWALK**

Until we're once again shooting in toward the grocery store. Candles have been lit and Bemis sits on a packing crate, reading the torn

fragment of a newspaper. He lays it aside, goes over to a shelf, takes out a carton of cigarettes, opens up a pack, lights the cigarette on one of the candles. Then he sits back down on the crate, takes a deep drag on the cigarette, looks at the smoke as it streams out into the quiet night air. Then he rises again, goes over to a box of cigars, takes a handful and puts them in his pocket. He sees a box full of pipes, empties it on the top of the crate, selects one, puts that in his pocket, too. Then he crosses over to stand at the broken window staring out into the street.

**90. REVERSE ANGLE  
LOOKING TOWARD BEMIS**

From the sidewalk.

BEMIS

(reflectively, with little emotion)

The worst thing . . . the worst thing. Is being alone.

(a pause)

Is this the way it's going to be? I mean . . . I mean will it be just sitting here on a box and eating and smoking cigarettes and reading the same half of a newspaper over and over again?

He reaches up and rubs his face, feeling the tremendous sense of depression that suddenly weighs over him. He retraces his steps back into what was left of the store, blows out the candles, then turns and walks out the skeleton door frame and out onto the street.

DISSOLVE TO:

**91.-94. SERIES OF MOVING  
SHOTS BEMIS  
WALKING NIGHT  
AND THEN DAY**

SUPERIMPOSE pics of destroyed buildings.

DISSOLVE TO:

**95. EXT. STREET BEMIS**

He lies on what was once a couch that has been flung onto the sidewalk by the explosion. He opens his eyes, blinks up at the sun, rises, dusting himself off,

straightens his tie, succumbing to a habit of a lifetime, and then sort of smiles at himself, realizing what he's done. He pauses, looking off across the street.

**96. PAN SHOT OVER TO A  
CONVERTIBLE**

That lies practically unscathed at the curb.

**97. REVERSE ANGLE BEMIS**  
As he smiles a little excitedly.

**98. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING  
DOWN**

As he runs over to the car.

**99. MED. CLOSE SHOT CAR**  
As he gets in, honks the horn, turns the key. For a moment the engine seems to start and take, then dies down. He tries to start it over and over again. Nothing happens. He leans against the horn, his eyes close for a moment, then gets out of the car and starts back toward the other side of the street. Again he stops.

**100. CLOSE SHOT HIS FOOT**  
As it kicks away some debris to reveal a sign which reads, "Sporting Goods." His eyes go up, looking toward a display case that's been turned over on its side. He goes over to it, wrestles with it,

finally turns it over. It lands with a crash of broken glass.

**101. MED. CLOSE SHOT OPEN  
DISPLAY CASE**

In it are guns and ammunition.

**102. CLOSE SHOT BEMIS'S  
HAND**

As he reaches in for a revolver, takes it out.

**103. MED. CLOSE SHOT BEMIS**

As he sits on the remnant of a curb and starts to examine the gun. He lays it down at his side, stares forlornly out in front of him.

**104. DIFFERENT ANGLE  
BEMIS'S FACE**

As gradually we see a resolution taking form. Once again his hand reaches for the gun. He picks it up and studies it again.

BEMIS

If it just weren't for the loneliness . . . for the sameness. If there was just something to do. Just something to do.

(another silence)

I'm sure I could be forgiven for this. The way things are . . . I know I could be forgiven . . .

The CAMERA PANS OVER to a



shadow on the road. We see the gun in his hand. Slowly rising in an arc toward his head then suddenly stop. The hand goes down. The gun falls to the ground.

**105. FLASH SHOT THE GUN**  
As it lands on the ground.

**106. PAN SHOT ACROSS THE GROUND**

To a set of concrete steps covered by the remnants of a large sign.

**107. HIGH HAT SHOT**

Looking toward Bemis as he runs toward the camera.

CUT TO:

**108. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT SIGN**

As Bemis suddenly hovers over it. The sign reads: "Public Library."

**109. LONG ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN**

From a high stack of books at Bemis as he stares up in silent amazed, fascinated wonderment.

**110.-112. DIFFERENT ANGLES BEMIS**

Walking through the bookshelves.

BEMIS

(as he walks)

Collected Works of Shakespeare.

Complete Works of Dickens.

Collected Plays of G. B. Shaw.

Poems of Browning ... Shelly, Keats.

Great Dramas of the World.

**113. CLOSE SHOT BEMIS**

As he stands at the bottom of one of the high racks and suddenly in exultation pounds at it, screaming.

BEMIS

Books. Books. All the books I need. All the books I want.

Several books topple over to land near him and he continues to pound and shake, laughing, crying.

BEMIS

Keats. Shelly. Shakespeare. Shaw. Books.

DISSOLVE TO:

**114. EXT. LIBRARY DAY LONG SHOT BEMIS**

As he comes out from the center of a corridor carrying an armload of books. The CAMERA PULLS BACK to take in a shot of row upon row of books spread out in a line put there by Bemis in neat stacks.

**115. MOVING SHOT BEMIS**

As he walks from stack to stack. He sings songs as he goes past each stack hitting the top book.

BEMIS

January. February. March.

April. May. This year. Next year.

Year after. Year after that.

He stops at the last stack of books, turns to survey the long line of stacks and then hesitantly, almost fearfully, he reaches for the first book, holds it in his hand for a moment, feels it, fondles it, then he tucks it under his arm and walks over to the steps and sits down. His eyes scan the rows of books that we see behind him, then down to the pavement a few feet below him where there is a half-cracked clock lying face up. He puts the book down, rises, goes over to stand over the clock, smiles down at it.

BEMIS

And the best part ... the very best part ... there's time now. There's all the time I need. All the time I want. There's time enough at last.

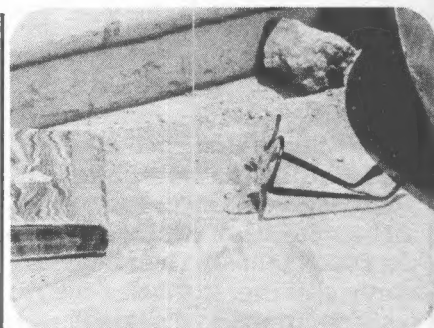
He retraces his footsteps back over to the steps, sits down, leans against a pillar, looks down at the book, which lies open to its first page. He bends over to pick it up.

**116. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT HIS GLASSES**

As they fall on the steps and break.

**117. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE SHOT**

Looking up toward Bemis from the ground. The look on his face could only be described as that of a man suddenly beset by a demon. First horror, then fear, then a sick, all-pervading sadness and realization.



**118. REVERSE ANGLE BEMIS'S P.O.V.**

The book and broken glasses, distorted, fuzzy, out of focus as his hand comes out from behind the camera, groping, touches the glasses, feels of them, and then lets them drop. Then the hand gropes over to the book, picks it up, holds it out in front of him. The page is blurred.

**119. DIFFERENT ANGLE BEMIS**

Tears roll down his face. He slowly rises, the book clutched in his hands. The CAMERA STARTS A SLOW DOLLY away from him as he stands there all by himself amid the books, crying.

BEMIS

It isn't fair. It isn't fair at all.

There was time now. There was all the time I needed. It isn't fair ... it isn't fair ...

The CAMERA CONTINUES its dolly back until we're on a tableau of the tiny figure of a man and the echo of his voice crying in the silence, the rubble, the loneliness. Over this tableau we hear the NARRATOR'S VOICE.

NARRATOR'S VOICE

The best laid plans of mice and men ... and Henry Bemis. The small man in the glasses who wanted nothing but time. Nothing but a moment out of an eon of moments. Nothing but an instant out of an eternity. Henry Bemis, now just a part of a smashed landscape. Just a piece of the rubble. Just a fragment of what man has deeded to himself. Mr. Henry Bemis ... in the Twilight Zone.